METRO / A23

David Bunevacz accuses biz associates of beating him, stealing car, watch, cell phone

BUSINESS / B1

Gov't posts record budget surplus of P54.1B

ACROSS / A18

Batangas vice governor seeks Comelec exec's inhibition in hearing of protest of rival Ermita

NEWS / A13

Suspect arrested in murder of lifestyle icon Ernest Santiago

Property bust? Lunar land prices are rocketing

SA LANGIT TAYO MAG INVEST!

LONDON—PROPERTY investors smarting from this year's housing bust in the United States might do well to look farther afield—even out of this world.

PROPERTY/ A21

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, December 19, 2007 ★★ 11 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 11 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

RP hike in US military aid depends on rights cases

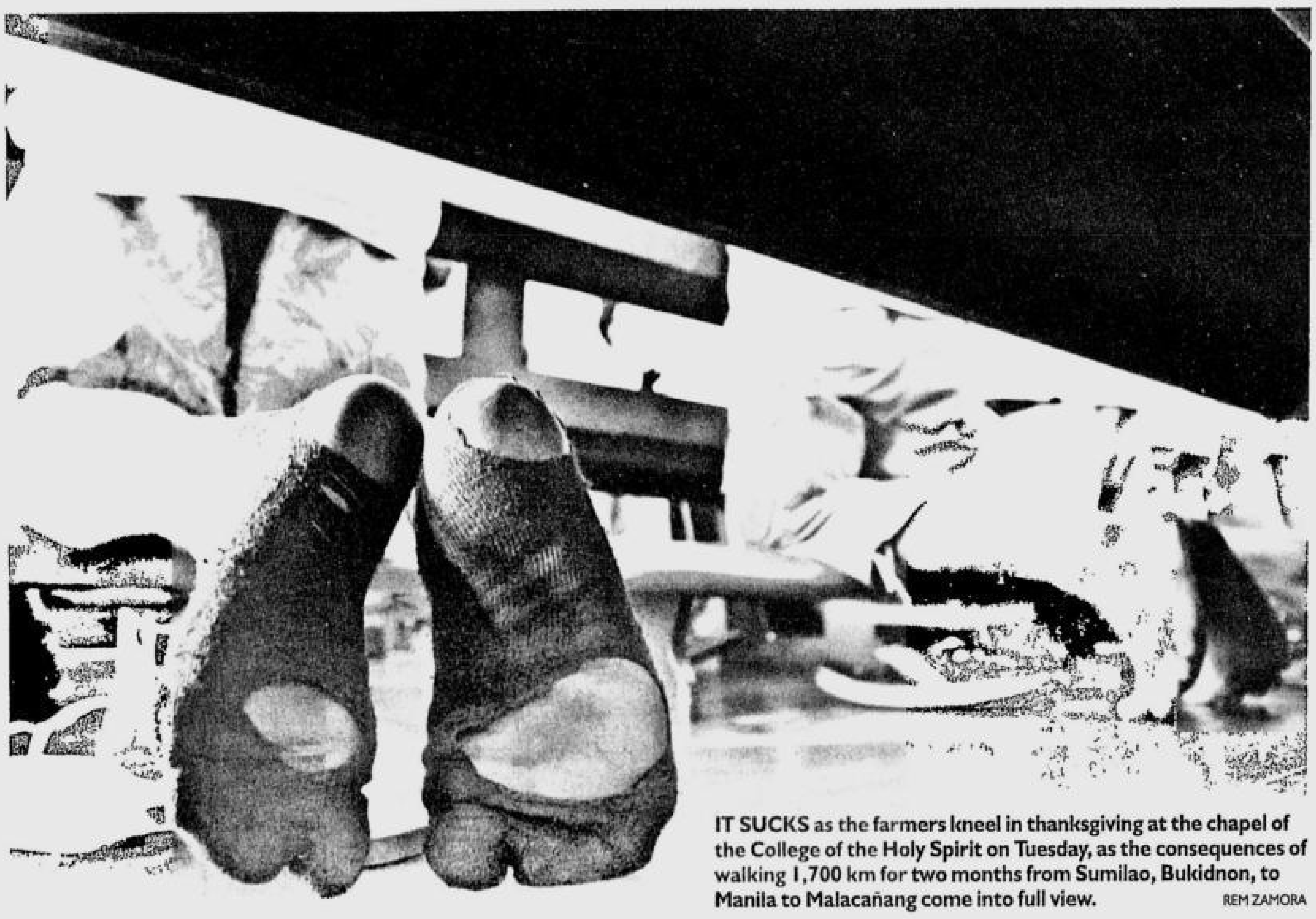
WASHINGTON—US LAWMAKERS HAVE agreed to boost military aid to the Philippines and Indonesia, but some of the money would be contingent on human rights improvements.

The Philippines would see its aid improve slightly from $29.7 million in 2007 to $30 million this year. Of that, $2 million would

RP HIKE/ A6

Weary feet, happy faces

GMA revokes land-use conversion of Sumilao estate



IT SUCKS as the farmers kneel in thanksgiving at the chapel of the College of the Holy Spirit on Tuesday, as the consequences of walking 1,700 km for two months from Sumilao, Bukidnon, to Manila to Malacañang come into full view. REM ZAMORA

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning

A DAY AFTER TWICE meeting with the Sumilao farmers, President Macapagal-Arroyo took what her officials described as "the first step toward the return" of the land they are claiming.

The President, through Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, authorized the issuance of an order revoking the land-use conversion of the disputed 144-hectare property in Sumilao, Bukidnon.

What was reclassified as agro-industrial land—and now being developed by San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI)—has been reverted to agricultural land covered by the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), according to Ms Arroyo's spokesperson, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

But Marlon Manuel, the farmers' chief lawyer, said the order had no clear directive on what the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) should do next.

"It will be the start of another long battle to return the land to the farmers," Manuel said.

Along with Cabinet Secretary

WEARY/ A10

'Gov't tool,' censors body accused over films X rating

By Christian V. Esguerra and Marinel R. Cruz,
Entertainment

THE GOVERNMENT'S CENSORS board has provoked two militant lawmakers by giving an X rating to three films purportedly casting the Arroyo administration in a negative light.

Gabriela Representatives Liza Maza and Luzviminda Ilagan yesterday filed a resolution seeking a congressional inquiry into the rating. They alleged that the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) was being used "for political repression."

The complaint referred to the short films "Mendiola" and "A Day in the Life of Gloria Arrovo," and "Rights," a compilation of "public service announcements on human rights, extrajudicial killings and disappearances."

Maza said in a statement: "The MTRCB, in rating these movies X, has proven itself to be an effec-

GOV'T TOOL/ A8

Witness tells court UP coed chained to bed

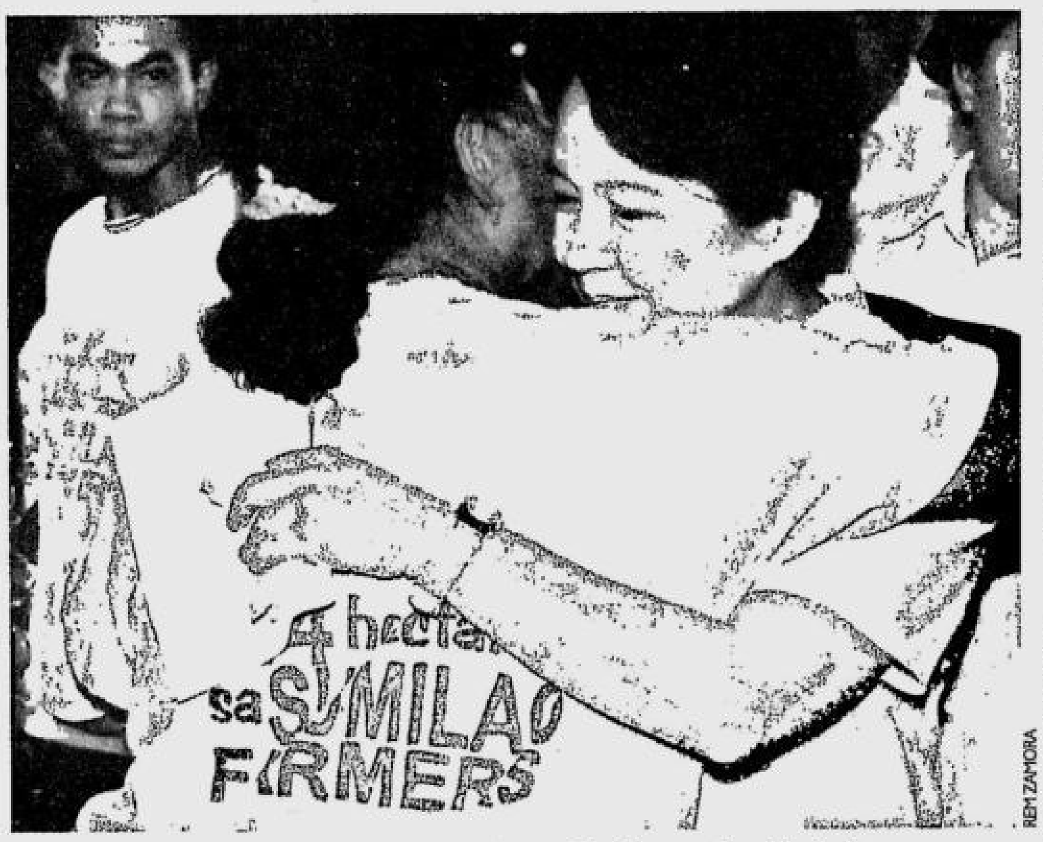
By Leila B. Salaverria

THE WITNESS TESTIFIED HE saw the missing student in a military camp where he had been taken after he was kidnapped by paramilitary soldiers last year.

A farmer yesterday told the Court of Appeals that he saw the missing student of the University of the Philippines, Sherlyn Cadapan, chained to a bed in a military camp in Bulacan. Raymond Manalo testified during a hearing on an amparo petition filed by the mothers of Cadapan and Karen Empeño, another missing UP student, to stop the military from harming their daughters as well as Manuel Merino, who was al-

WITNESS/ A8

Church to monitor farmers' case all the way



REM ZAMORA

JUSTICE, PEACE EMBRACE. In her first meeting on Monday morning with the farmers, President Arroyo hugs Hilda San-ahan, one of the farmers' leaders chosen to meet Ms Arroyo.

By Beverly T. Natividad and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH YESTERDAY promised continued assistance to the Sumilao farmers in their land claim.

"We will try to ... help the farmers through ... until [President Macapagal-Arroyo's] decision comes true for them. We will follow this through with the Church in Mindanao," Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo told the INQUIRER.

He said the Mindanao dioceses, as well as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' social action arm, the National Secretariat for Social Action (CBCP-Nassa), would monitor the case and the implementation of the President's executive order.

Pabillo heads the CBCP-Nassa.

But Senators Benigno Aquino III and Gregorio Honasan questioned Ms Arroyo's decision to place the disputed 144-hectare property in Sumilao, Bukidnon, under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Aquino said Ms Arroyo should have arranged for a compromise agreement between the farmers and San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), which had proposed to develop the

CHURCH/ A10

Hard part begins: 4-step process takes many months

By TJ Burgonio

THE 55 HIGAONON FARMERS are virtually "back to square one" in their fresh bid to reclaim a former corn plantation in Sumilao, Bukidnon, which was placed under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) yesterday.

The farmers will have to go through the same tedious process—which could take from eight months to more than a year—before they could possess and till the 144-hectare plantation in Sumilao town, a

HARD PART/ A10

2 METRO BOMBINGS

Batasan blast claims life of sixth victim

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THE BATASAN BOMBING CLAIMED the life of a sixth victim on Monday night when a staff member of Negros Occidental Rep. Pryde Henry Teves, who was injured in the blast, died in a hospital in Quezon City.

Vercita Garcia, 34, succumbed to multiple organ failure secondary to multiple blast injuries at around 6:30 p.m. on Monday.

She had been confined at St. Luke's Medical Center for more than a month since the Nov. 13 bombing.

Garcia's remains lie at Arlington Memorial chapel on Araneta Avenue in Quezon City.

Her death followed those of two other Teves staff members last month.

Maan Gale Bustalino died on Nov. 14 while being transferred from Malvar General Hospital to Capitol Medical Center.

Dennis Manila died on Nov. 30 while confined at St. Luke's. Manila's right leg was amputated because of the massive injuries he sustained.

Others killed in the blast were Basilan Rep. Wahab Akbar, who died several hours after the bombing; Marcial Taldo, the driver of Gabriela party-list Rep. Luzviminda Ilagan, who was killed instantly, and Julasiri Hayudini, a staff member of Akbar who died hours after the blast.

Nine people, including Teves and Ilagan, were injured in the bombing.

Four days after the blast, the Philippine National Police (PNP) declared the Batasan bombing case "solved but not closed" following the killing of three alleged Abu Sayyaf members in a raid in Payatas, Quezon City, on Nov. 15.

But the PNP said it had yet to pinpoint the mastermind.

Former Basilan Gov. Gerry Salapuddin admitted knowing two of the three supposed Abu Sayyaf members

BATASAN/ A21

PNP postpones release of Glorietta 2 blast report

By Alcuin Papa

A FULL TWO MONTHS AFTER THE deadly Glorietta 2 mall explosion, the Philippine National Police (PNP) is now saying that the public may have to wait until after the Christmas season to find out the full story behind the blast.

Chief Supt. Luizo Ticman, Southern Police District (SPD) director, yesterday said the investigators and the experts they had consulted had asked for an extension of the deadline for the submission of their final report.

Ticman said the investigators told him the experts had asked for a January deadline and that he was "inclined to approve" the request.

Earlier, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief Director Geary Barias and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said the final report—which would include recommendations on charges to be filed against those believed responsible—would be released today.

But Ticman said investigators had found "vital" evidence that could be

PNP POSTPONES/ A21

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Second FrontPage

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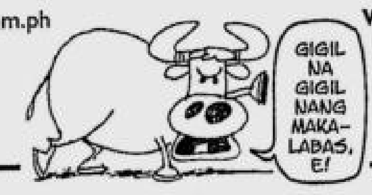

GIGIL NA GIGIL NANG MAKA-LABAS, E!

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Mostly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Mostly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: SCHATZI QUODALA, PDI RESEARCH/12/18/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

EZ2 17 22 | **SIX DIGIT** 5 4 1 7 5 3

(In exact order)

Mid-Day **SUERTRES** Evening

3 6 6 | 6 9 6

6/42 LUZON/VIS-MIN

2 5 13 20 27 36

P4,798,632.60

Gonzalez gags Jalosjos, other cons

Order triggered by child rapist's claim he's a free man; not a prisoner

By Leila B. Salaverria and Julie M. Aurelio

BECAUSE OF THE CONFUSION OVER THE RElease of convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos' and the latter's threat to sue government over the reversal, media interviews with all inmates and prisoners will now have to be cleared with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

Gonzalez yesterday issued a memorandum to the Bureau of Corrections ordering that all media interviews with and press briefings by inmates and prisoners will not be allowed without prior clearance with his office.

In a phone interview, Gonzalez said he issued the directive because of a press interview that Jalosjos gave in which he insisted that he was now a free man, despite a presidential order stopping his release, supposedly set for Dec. 16.

Prison officials last Sunday discharged Jalosjos in line with an order issued by President Macapagal-Arroyo reducing his two life terms to 16 years.

Jalosjos was convicted in 1997 for two counts of statutory rape and six counts of acts of lasciviousness under the Revised Penal Code. His victim was an 11-year-old girl.

In line with the Malacañang order, prison officials last Sunday ordered Jalosjos' discharge as by their computation, by Dec. 16 Jalosjos had served, with allowance for good behavior, 16 years in prison.

But following a public outcry, Malacañang swiftly reversed itself. Gonzalez stopped the Bureau of Prisons from releasing Jalosjos, saying that justice department computations showed that Jalosjos should be released in April 2009 at the earliest.

Last Sunday, Jalosjos walked out of the NBP armed with a certificate of discharge, only to submit himself again to prison officials after the Department of Justice said he could not be freed yet.

Gonzalez said he was reviewing the computation and checking the validity of the time credits given to the former Zamboanga del Norte congressman by former Bureau of Prisons Director Vicente Vinarao.

In his interview with reporters the other day, Jalosjos threatened to take legal action against the government if he is not released soon.

Gonzalez yesterday said statements like these from Jalosjos only muddled the information reaching the people.

"They will confuse the public by their statements," he said.

Vinarao yesterday defended his computation of Jalosjos' remaining time in prison in an interview with dzBB radio.

Gonzalez, Reyes face bypass anew

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE CABINET APPOINTMENTS of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes are unlikely to be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments (CA) this year.

But Defense Sectary Gilbert Teodoro and Trade Secretary Peter Favila who are scheduled to appear today before the CA's plenary session are expected to be confirmed.

Two members of the bicameral CA yesterday moved to defer deliberations on Gonzalez's appointment until next year while two senators are against Reyes' appointment.

Sen. Jamby Madrigal and party-list Rep. Joel Villanueva said they want more time to grill the Justice secretary on "several issues" before his appointment is submitted for the plenary's consideration.

Last meeting

Today's plenary session is the CA's last meeting this year before Congress goes on a month-long recess for the holidays starting Dec. 21. Thus, Gonzalez confirmation would have to wait until next year.

"Out of respect for members of the CA, normally the tradition is to accede to their request.... He (Gonzalez) is effectively bypassed," Sen. Panfilo Lacson said.

"It's not the first time this happened. We can schedule a hearing after we return from the break, but he (Gonzalez) has to answer all opposition and there are a lot of them," he added.

Lacson said among the issues that would be thrown against Gonzalez was his deliberate absence at a Senate hearing last week into the media arrests at the height of the Manila Peninsula siege last Nov. 29.

"He insulted the Senate by saying the hearing was not in aid of legislation... He should explain himself for making remarks tantamount to insulting the Senate as an institution," Lacson said.

Earlier two other CA members, Senators Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Jinggoy Estrada, have given notice that they would invoke Section 20 when the CA takes up Reyes' nomination during its plenary session today.

'Unfit for office'

Section 20 allows a member to move for the suspension of the CA's action on any nomination or appointment until the next session without having to give any reason.

"I simply believe that he is unfit for the office," Santiago told reporters. She pointed out that Reyes was only given Cabinet posts by President Macapagal-Arroyo as a reward for withdrawing support from then president Joseph Estrada when he was still the military chief.

"I am against this practice of rewarding military officials for breaking the law in favor of one presidential personality against another, rewarding them with a series of government posts for which his educational background or training have never prepared him," Santiago said.

Sen. Estrada said he was against Reyes' appointment as Energy secretary because he was "totally unfit" for the post.

He said he no longer considered Reyes' crucial defection that eventually led to his father's ouster.

"But I still have a lot of reasons why I have to block his confirmation," said Estrada.

"During the budget hearings he could not explain the hiring of 120 consultants, the hiring of a foreign consultant. He wanted to hold office in all the attached corporations of the Department of Energy. And he fired the president of Transco in an arrogant manner," he said.

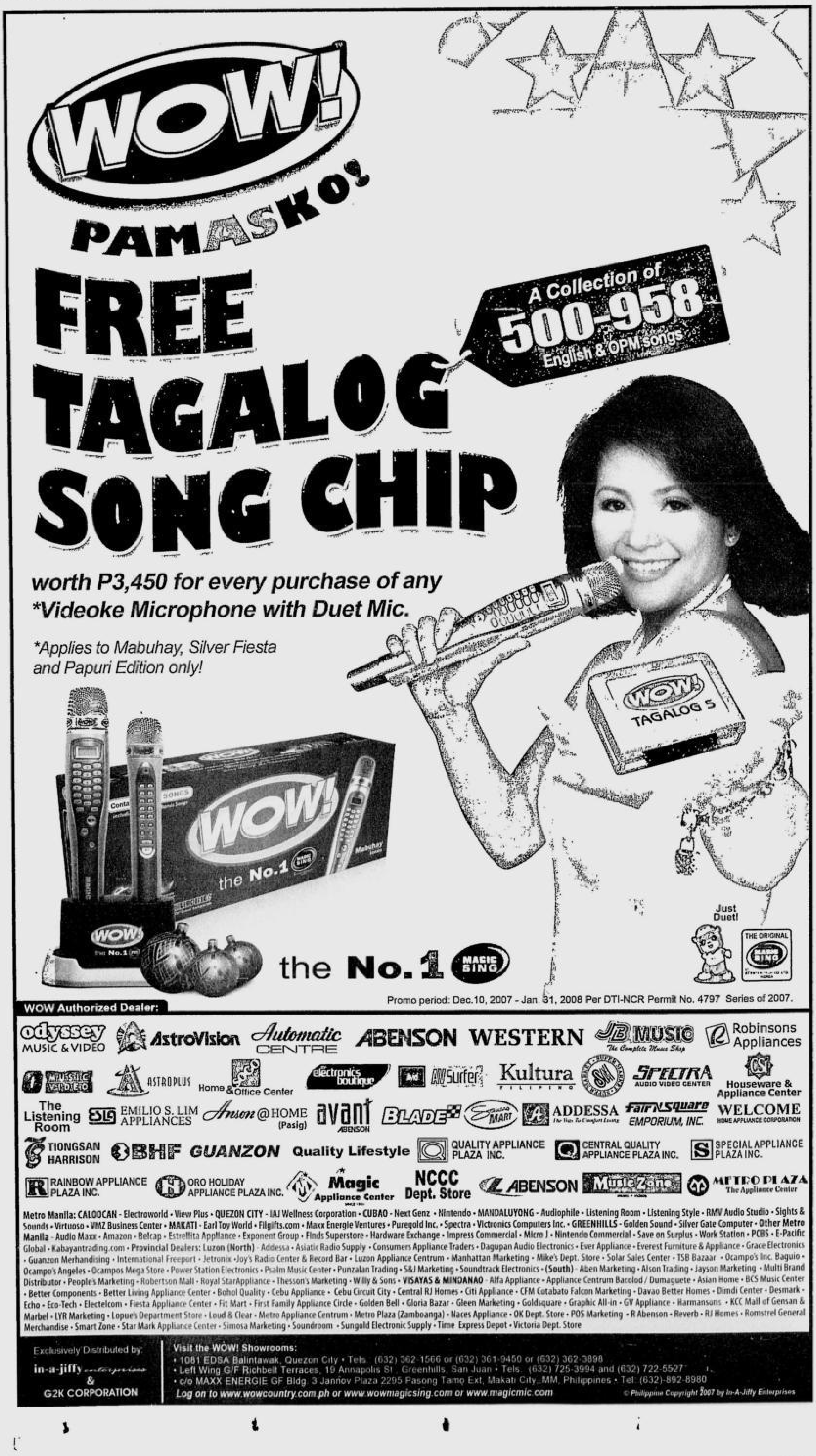
WHAT'S INSIDE

GMA RATING slips some more despite Erap pardon /A11

JOBLESS rate down in 2007, says survey /A12

GMA WANTS truce reviewed /A5

HOUSE OK's cheaper meds bill /A22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TAYLOR HICKS at the Hard Rock Café yesterday: "I'm not into competing anymore." RYAN LIM

American Idol Taylor Hicks is here

By Fran Katigbak
Lifestyle

HAS TAYLOR HICKS, winner of "American Idol" Season 5, gone from manic performer to subdued balladeer?

The salt-and-pepper-haired singer-songwriter charmed fans of the hugely popular reality talent search in 2006 with his raspy, soulful voice. But his signature dance moves were routinely criticized by judge Simon Cowell, who repeatedly said Hicks was "performing like he's drunk."

Yesterday afternoon, in a crisp white shirt, black jacket, denim jeans and alligator-skin boots, Hicks made a smooth entrance, playing the blues on his harmonica, when he turned up to meet local media at the Hard Rock Café.

The first "American Idol" champ to visit the country (finalists Constantine Maroulis and Elliot Yamin were previous Manila visitors), Hicks, a native of Alabama, is here for a series of shows sponsored by the Ayala Malls.

"I heard from friends of mine that this is the place to come if you want to sing and perform music," said Hicks, 31. It was Fil-Am José "Sway" Penala, a fellow finalist, who first told him about the Philippines, he added.

Inspiration

The self-taught musician said his biggest inspiration was Ray Charles. And so, he said, he was honored to sing "The Right Place," originally written for Charles, in his self-titled album due for release this month.

"Life after 'American Idol' has been like sitting on a rocket ship," said Hicks. "I can't go out without bodyguards."

On the bright side, "I get to travel to play my music, and collaborate with some really great artists."

His triumph on "Idol" brought him a record deal with Clive Davis and 19 Recordings Limited/Artista Records.

Asked if he feels pressured to surpass the achievements of previous "Idols," Hicks replied: "I'm not into competing [anymore]—I'm into performing music and gaining new fans."

Hicks will be at the Greenbelt 3 Park tonight at 8 and at the TriNoma Activity Center tomorrow, 7 p.m.

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Corrections

IN THE DEC. 17 ISSUE, a front-page article—"Ernest helped define RP's lifestyle landscape"—misstated the name of a Southern Tagalog route that features different attractions. The route is called Viaje del Sol—not Via del Sol.

* * *

IN LATER EDITIONS of the Dec. 18 issue, the front-page banner story—"GMA lifts farmers' hopes"—misspelled the surname of a bishop. The bishop's name is Broderick Pabillo—not Padillo.

* * *

THE SAME ARTICLE misstated the date when truncheon-bearing police blocked Sumilao farmers who were marching on Malacañang. The incident happened on Dec.,7—not Dec. 17.

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MAGDALO TRIAL

Mutineers want judge out

By DJ Yap and Leila B. Salaverria

ELEVEN JUNIOR MILITARY OFFICERS charged with rebellion, including now Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, in connection with the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny yesterday asked the Makati judge hearing their case to inhibit himself for supposedly 'prejudging' the case.

They sought the voluntary inhibition of Judge Oscar Pimentel of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 148, citing their "perception of what they believe to be the unfair handling of the case."

In particular, the 10 accused junior officers, who are represented by lawyer Reynaldo Robles, cited a question by Pimentel in the last hearing that was addressed to Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, a defense witness.

In the Dec. 11 hearing, the judge asked Lim if he was "aware that the act committed by these officers are not only punishable under the Articles of War but also the Revised Penal Code."

The 11 accused said they were "utterly surprised, shocked and mortified" when they heard the question.

"As far as they are concerned, the said question clearly indicates the state of mind of the Honorable Presiding Judge and indubitably shows that the Honorable Presiding Judge has already prejudged their case," they said.

Trillanes, the junior officers along with Lim and others belonging to the Magdalo group walked out of Pimentel's courtroom during the Nov. 29 hearing, marched in the streets and occupied the Peninsula Manila for six hours.

In their motion, the 11 also cited what they described as Pimentel's "apparent rush" to have the accused present their evidence.

In contrast, they said the prosecution was given four years to present its evidence.

The 11 accused also moved for the cancellation of the Dec. 20 hearing and the suspension of the proceedings.

Also yesterday, civilians accused of joining the Manila Pen siege led by Fr. Robert Reyes asked the Supreme Court to cite Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco for contempt for allegedly letting "political considerations" affect the decision to charge them with rebellion.

The petitioners included lawyers J.V. Bautista, Argee Guevarra and retired Navy Capt. Julian Advincula, who were among the 14 civilians ordered released by the Makati RTC which found that there was not enough basis to support the rebellion charge against them.

According to the petitioners, their being known as critics and opponents of President Macapagal Arroyo was taken into account when the DOJ found probable cause to charge them with rebellion.

Gonzalez said he had ordered prosecutors to study whether the released civilians could be held liable for sedition or inciting to sedition.

Gonzalez said he was also looking at the possibility of reviving the rebellion complaint.

"I'm not satisfied with the finding of the Makati court. Our finding is that they could at least be held liable as accessories in the rebellion," he said in a phone interview.

Velasco, for his part, said he was just doing his mandated task.

"If there should be anybody who should be cited for contempt by the court, they are those who disrespected the hearing at the Makati RTC last Nov. 29 by staging a walkout and a rebellion," he said.

The petitioners also said Gonzalez and Velasco's actions disobeyed the Supreme Court's June 2007 ruling where it "reprimanded and chastised" Gonzalez and Velasco for allowing political considerations to be a factor in conducting the inquest and preliminary investigation of the rebellion complaint against six party list representatives, and Vicente Ladlad, Nathanael Santiago, Randall Echanis and Rey Claro Casambre.

Two civilians yesterday said that the DOJ should stop the preliminary investigation of their case, citing the Makati RTC's recent dismissal of the rebellion charges filed against them.

Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona's daughter Stella and civilian Ray Linaac, through their lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr., indicated their sentiments in their counter-affidavits with a motion to dismiss which they filed before the DOJ. *With a report from Margaux C. Ortiz*

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These kids want their parents for Christmas

By TJ Burgonio

SURFACE "THE DISAPPEARED." Stop the abductions. Pull the military out of the villages.

These demands, not toys, were on the Christmas wish list of children whose parents had been abducted by the military or whose families had been displaced by government operations against communist rebels in the countryside.

The children wrote down their wishes on a large Christmas card they made and plan to send to President Macapagal-Arroyo this week with the help of the Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns.

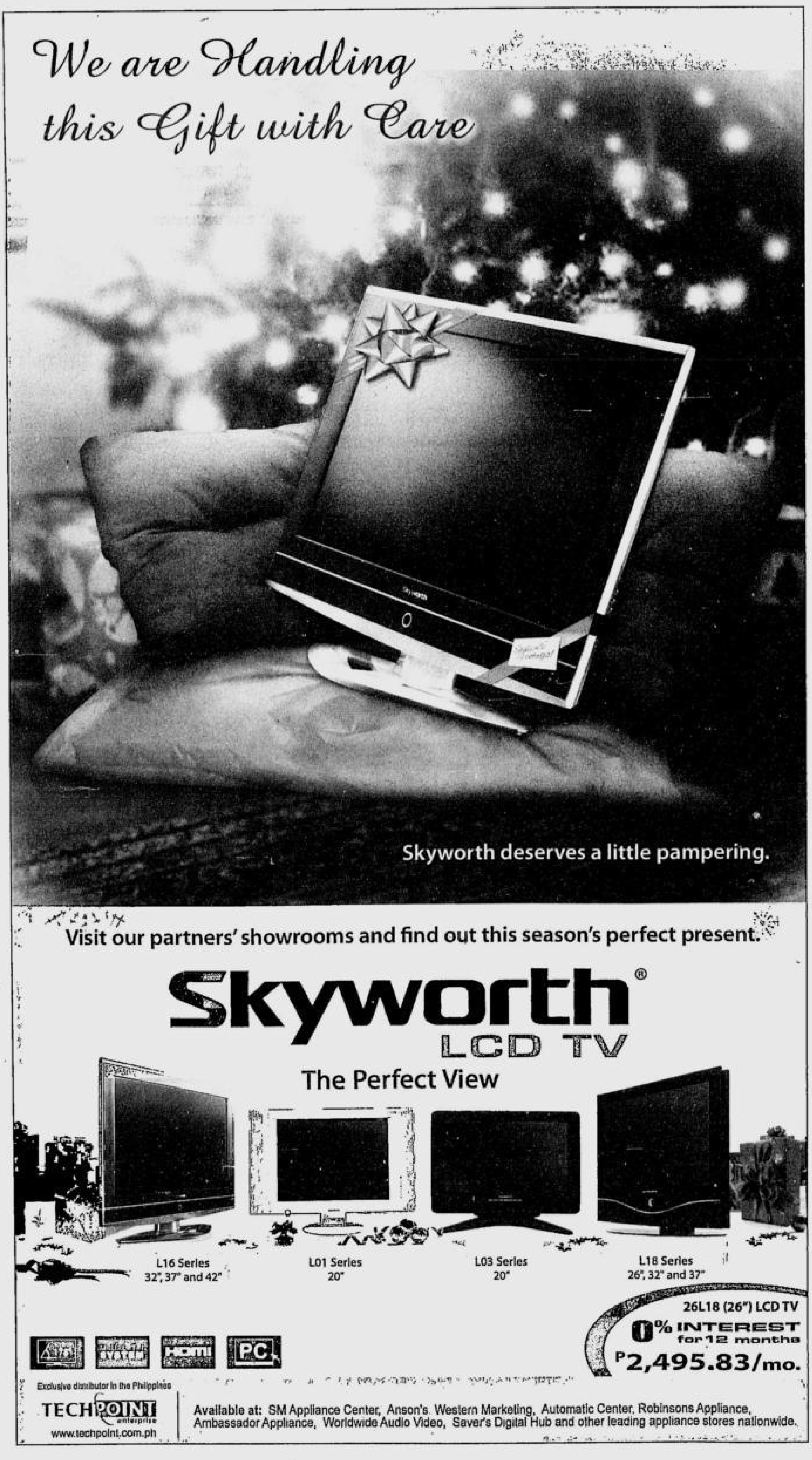
"As we speak, many human rights violations are being committed. But we're hopeful the President will listen to our wishes so we'll find justice," Liza, 16, whose father and brother were abducted in Quezon province in June 2006, said at a press briefing.

Four other children, who were traumatized by the atrocities allegedly committed by soldiers in their villages, aired the same hope. They asked that their last names be withheld for security reasons.

"We hope she will grant our wishes," said Lyn, who was shot at and tagged a child warrior by the military in Baggao, Cagayan, last year.

The children made the giant card during a workshop organized by Salinlahi, an umbrella organization of child rights and welfare organizations nationwide. They shared their experiences in a forum dubbed "Children Speak Out."

"This Christmas, I wish the military would surface my father and brother so we can live as a whole and happy family again," said Liza, now a senior high school student in Quezon City.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GMA wants truce reviewed

THE GOVERNMENT SAYS THAT PEACE AND prosperity was its Christmas and New Year's gift to the nation but what if its offer of the traditional holiday truce is not acceptable to insurgents?

President Macapagal-Arroyo has called for a review of the unilateral three-week Christmas ceasefire declared by the Armed Forces following attacks by the communist New People's Army in Palawan.

Three Marines were killed within hours of the AFP's suspension of military operations against the rebels last Monday.

At a meeting of the National Security Council which she convened yesterday, the President said a review of the unilateral truce was in order since the "rebels don't accept this ceasefire."

It could not be ascertained at press time whether the NSC has already recommended the lifting of the Christmas truce.

The NPA last Monday rejected the AFP's offer of a Christmas truce and a three-year ceasefire proposal, vowing to mount more attacks in the coming days.

"Gen. Esperon's proposal for a three-year ceasefire is totally ridiculous and downright dubious," said Gregorio Rosal, spokesperson for the Communist Party of the Philippines, the political arm of the 6,000-member insurgents.

He was referring to a proposal by AFP Chief of Staff General Hermogenes Esperon last week for a three-year nationwide cessation of hostilities between both sides, paving the way for the resumption of stalled peace talks.

Ms Arroyo told the NSC, that she was saddened by the untimely death of the three Marines.

Michael Lim Ubac

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, December 19, 2007
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Jdg 13:2-7, 24-25
Gospel: Luke 1:5-25

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah, belonging to the priestly clan of Abiah. Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, also belonged to a priestly family. Both of them were upright in the eyes of God and lived blamelessly in accordance with all the laws and commands of the Lord, but they had no child. Elizabeth could not have any and now they were both very old.

Now, while Zechariah and those with him were fulfilling their office, it fell to him by lot, according to the custom of the priests, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. At the time of offering incense all the people were praying outside; it was then that an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. On seeing the angel, Zechariah was deeply troubled and fear took hold of him.

But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah, be assured that your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will bring joy and gladness to you and many will rejoice at his birth.

This son of yours will be great in the eyes of the Lord. Listen: he shall never drink wine or strong drink, but he will be filled with holy spirit even from his mother's womb. Through him many of the people of Israel will turn to the Lord their God. He himself will open the way to the Lord with the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah; he will reconcile fathers and children, and lead the disobedient to wisdom and righteousness, in order to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I believe this? I am an old man and my wife is elderly, too." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel, who stands before God, and I am the one sent to speak to you and bring you this good news! My words will come true in their time. But you would not believe and now you will be silent and unable to speak until this has happened."

Meanwhile the people waited for Zechariah, and they were surprised that he delayed so long in the sanctuary. When he finally appeared, he could not speak to them and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He remained dumb and made signs to them.

When his time of service was completed, Zechariah returned home and some time later Elizabeth became pregnant. For five months she kept to herself, remaining at home, and thinking, "What is the Lord doing for me! This is his time for mercy and for taking away my public disgrace."

Commentary

We are drawing close to the birth of the child, with history and geography jumping around. Now we meet some of the remnant, the faithful who believed in the promises and staked their lives on them, relying on God's word in spite of the events occurring around them in history. Do we belong to God's remnant and interpret the Scriptures not from a worldly political/nationalistic way but in God's way, so that we are converted and our religion gives us God's sight? The word of the Lord comes to Manoah's wife who was barren. But she will bear a son, and the Lord tells her to obey his commands for the "son she will conceive and give birth to will be consecrated to God from the womb." And the son will begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. The announcements follow the same pattern from the beginning. The story is told from the husband's point of view though it is the woman who gives birth. It is the same with Zechariah the priest and Elizabeth his wife. This time the word comes to the man, Zechariah, in the temple. He questions how this can be and is struck dumb because he does not trust the words of God. But the words, even if not believed, come true, and Elizabeth conceives.

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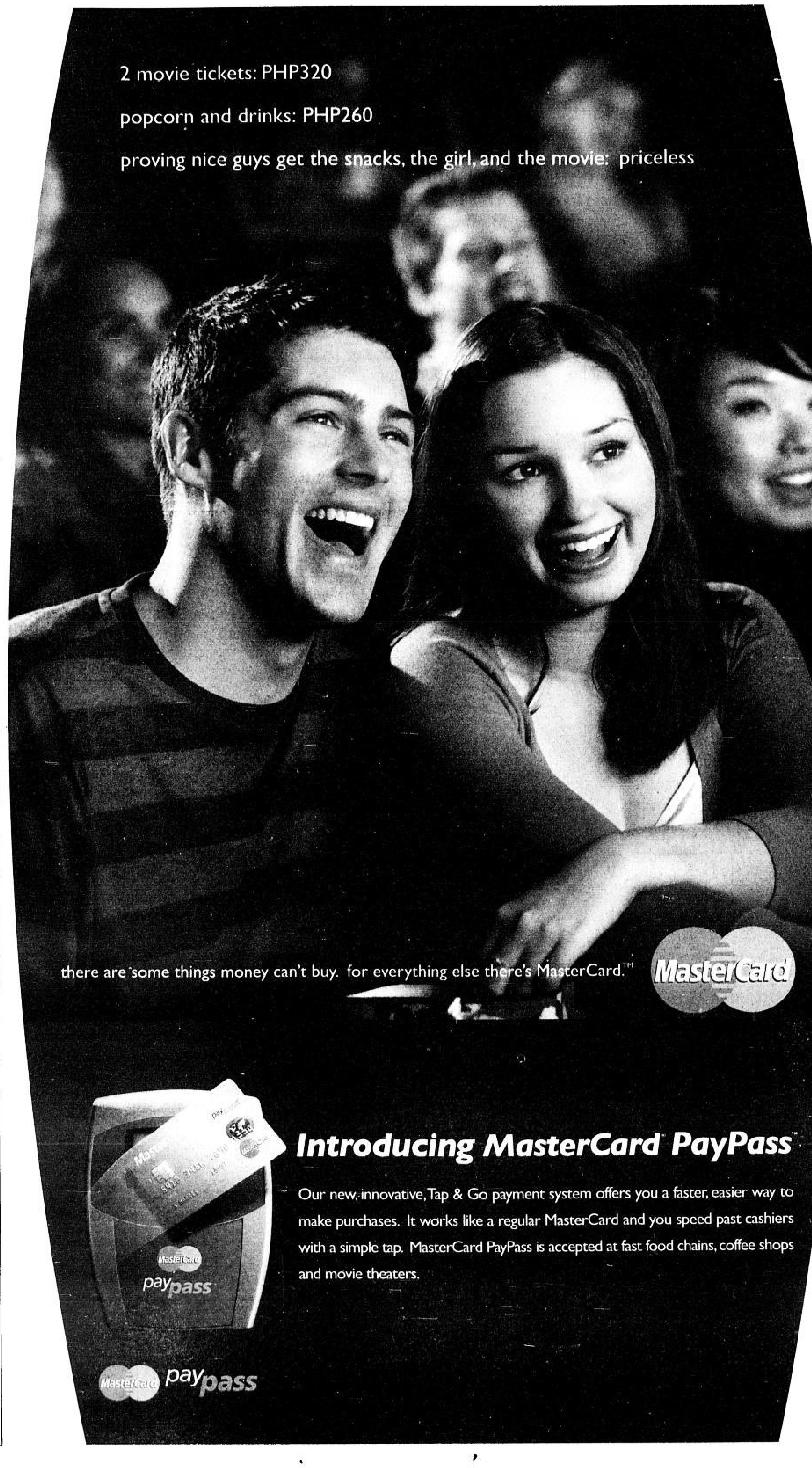
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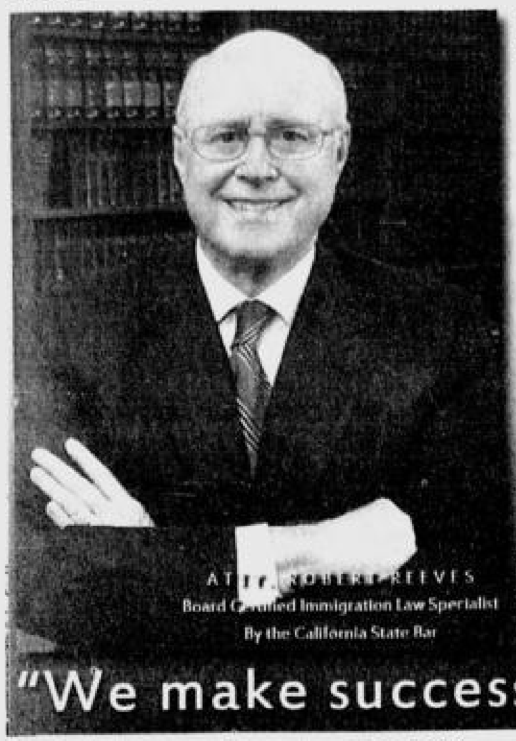

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WOMAN IN CHARGE. President Arroyo looks like she's on top of whatever it is Finance Secretary Margarito Teves is telling her before the start of the National Economic and Development Authority meeting at the Palace on Tuesday.

EDWIN BACASMAS

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On 19 November 2007, **PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION (POTC)** held its **ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING,** followed by POTC Board of Directors' Organizational Meeting (where a quorum was present throughout both meetings). The following were elected:

Daniel C. Gutierrez	- Director and Chair
Lin I. Bildner	- Director and Vice-Chair
Katrina Ponce Enrile	- Director and President/CEO
Marietta K. Ilusorio	- Director and Treasurer
Francisca Benedicto Paulino	- Director
Pablo L. Lobregat	- Director
Allan S. Montaño	- Director
Honorio A. Poblador III	- Director
Justice Santiago J. Ranada (Ret)	- Director
Victoria C. de los Reyes	- Corporate Secretary
Rafael A. Poblador	- Asst. Treasurer

On the same day, the **PHILIPPINE COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CORPORATION (PHILCOMSAT) ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING** (POTC being 100% registered/beneficial owner thereof) was held, immediately followed by a PHILCOMSAT Board of Directors' Organizational Meeting (where a quorum was present throughout both meetings). The following were elected:

Radm. Abraham R. Abesamis, AFP (Ret)	- Director and Chair
Pablo L. Lobregat	- Director and Vice-Chair
Ramon Jacinto	- Director and Chair, Exec. Committee
Lin I. Bildner	- Director and President/CEO
Marietta K. Ilusorio	- Director and Vice President
Katrina Ponce Enrile	- Director and Treasurer
Lorna P. Kapunan	- Director
Honorio Poblador III	- Director
Rodolfo G. Serrano, Jr.	- Director
John Benedict Sioson	- Corporate Secretary
Rafael A. Poblador	- Asst. Treasurer

On December 11, 2007, the **PHILCOMSAT HOLDINGS CORPORATION (PHC) SPECIAL SHAREHOLDERS' MEETING** (Philcomsat being 81% registered owner thereof) was held, immediately followed by a PHC Board of Directors Organizational Meeting. The following were elected:

Katrina Ponce Enrile	- Director and Chair
Daniel C. Gutierrez	- Director and Vice-Chair
Ramon Jacinto	- Director and President
Lin I. Bildner	- Director and CFO/Treasurer
Radm. Abraham R. Abesamis, AFP (Ret)	- Director
Oliverio Laperal	- Director
Pablo L. Lobregat	- Director
Jose Ma. Ozamiz	- Director
Honorio Poblador III	- Director
Rodolfo G. Serrano, Jr.	- Director
Prudencio Somera	- Director
Victoria C. de los Reyes	- Corporate Secretary
John Benedict Sioson	- Asst. Corporate Secretary
Rafael Poblador	- Asst. Treasurer
Lorna P. Kapunan	- Chief Legal Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer

RP hike in US ...

From page A1

be contingent on the country cracking down on extrajudicial killings allegedly by government agents.

US officials have expressed worry over a wave of killings of left-wing activists blamed on Philippine government forces.

The officials are said to want President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration to enforce reforms recommended by a UN official to prevent extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations before approving additional military aid.

Philippine officials have denied allegations that the military was behind most of the killings and have said the military has no policy of targeting civilians.

As of end-October, the Philippine human rights group Karapatan had recorded 887 killings of militants, as well as nearly 200 cases of enforced disappearances, since Ms Arroyo took office in 2001. The INQUIRER count of killings is about 300.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson, Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro, said US aid "will go a long way in the government's efforts in addressing the terrorism problem."

But he refrained from direct comment on the condition set by the US lawmakers for the release of some of the assistance.

"To us in the AFP, if there's an aid, it will go a long way. But if there's none, we will make do with whatever resources we have," Bacarro said.

No pressure needed

Commissioner Eligio Mallari of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights said that the government "is doing its best" to address the problem of extrajudicial killings, and deserved aid.

Mallari cited the efforts of the judiciary, which has set up 99 special courts to handle such cases and organized a summit early this year to draw up measures to solve the problem.

"The government need not be pressured [by the United States] because it is really trying its best to solve political killings in the country. But such efforts are being slowed down by bureaucracy and there are so many procedures that should be followed," Mallari said on the phone.

$500 billion

The US lawmakers also decided to bar all but a small amount of military aid to Sri Lanka until the Bush administration had certified that the Sri Lankan government had made certain improvements in its human rights practices.

The provisions were part of a $500 billion-plus spending bill agreed on by negotiators from the Senate and the House of Representatives that will pay for most of the federal government's 2008 budget.

The overall bill has been delayed by disagreements between Congress and President George W. Bush over its size and allocation of financing for the Iraq war.

The compromise still will need to be approved by the full House and Senate and sent to Bush for his signature before it takes effect.

Passage this week

Congress is expected this week to pass the bill, which includes $35 billion overall for the state department and foreign aid programs.

The negotiators agreed to provide $15.7 million in direct military aid for Indonesia, matching the Bush administration's request for a country it sees as crucial to fighting terrorism in Southeast Asia. The bill would delay approval, however, of $2.7 million of the money until US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has reported to Congress that Indonesia had devised plans to:

- Account for past human rights violations by the Indonesian military.
- Allow public access to Papua province, where a small separatist army seeks independence.
- Provide a deadline for completing a criminal investigation into the murder of Munir Said Thalib, a human rights activist and critic of Indonesia's military who was poisoned on an airline in 2004.

Bulwark against terrorism

The United States eliminated military ties with Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, in 1999 to protest alleged rights abuses by Indonesian troops in breakaway East Timor.

The ban was lifted in 2005 by the Bush administration, which views the Indonesian government as a bulwark against Islamic militancy. Figures do not include small amounts allocated for training.

Lawmakers also linked military aid to Sri Lanka to the island's improving its rights record, looking to spur change on an island that has seen a two-decade struggle between the government and Tamil Tiger rebels seeking a separate homeland for Tamils, an ethnic minority.

Surveillance cooperation

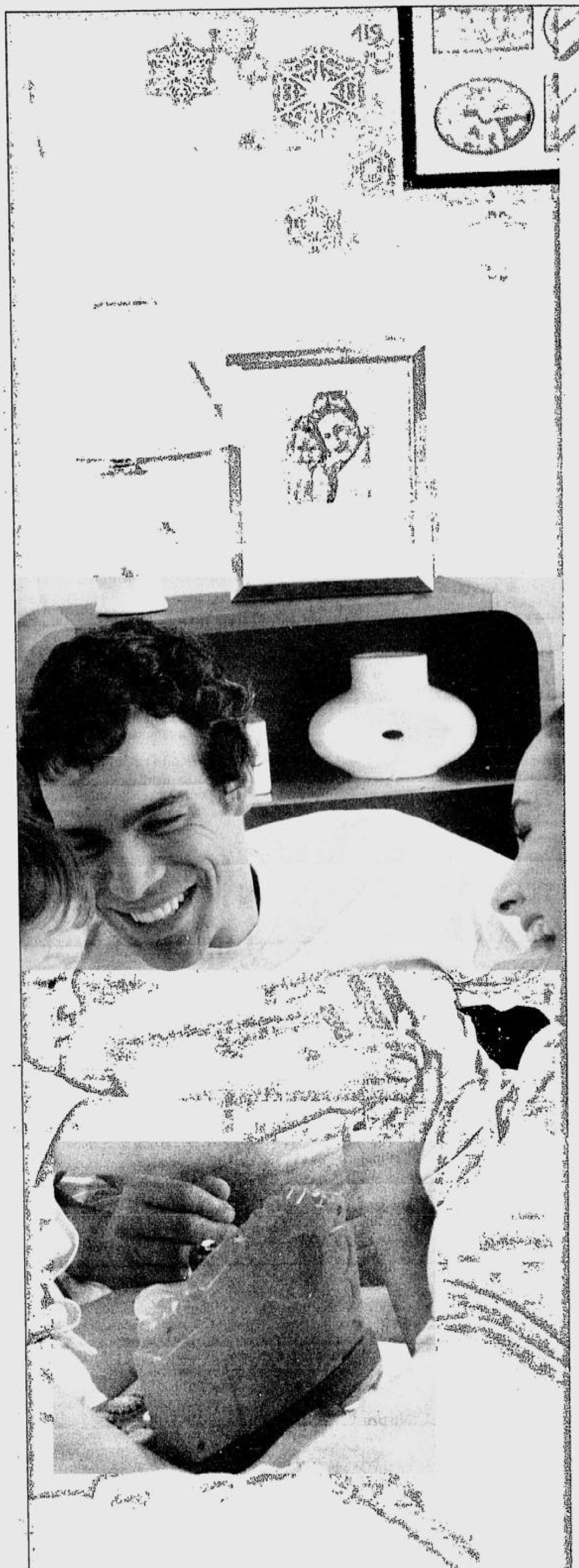
The bill would block all but a small amount of military aid for activities to include surveillance cooperation from the Sri Lankan authorities.

The bill is an embarrassment for the administration of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, which says its operations are meant to convince rebels that they cannot win a military victory.

The US bill would make any military grants for Sri Lanka dependent on certification by the US secretary of state that Sri Lanka has:

- Prosecuted military officials alleged to have recruited child soldiers and committed extrajudicial executions.
- Provided humanitarian groups and reporters access to Tamil areas of the country.
- Agreed to allow the United Nations to establish a human rights office in the country.

With reports from Jocelyn R. Uy, Nikko Dizon, PDI Research and AP



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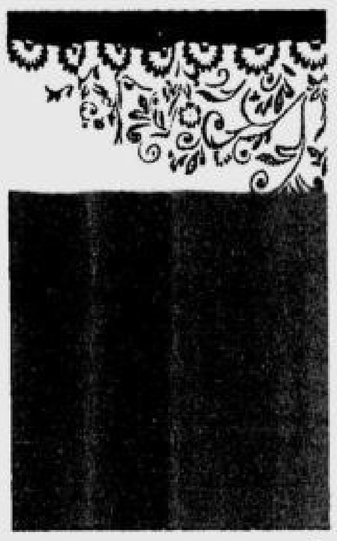

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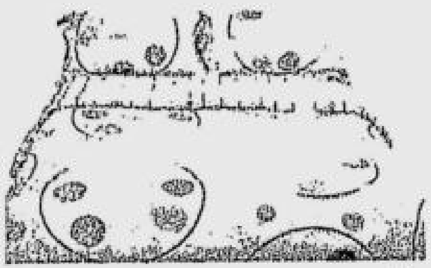

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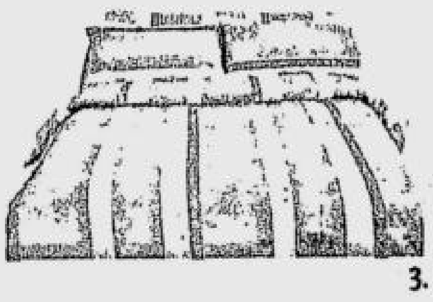

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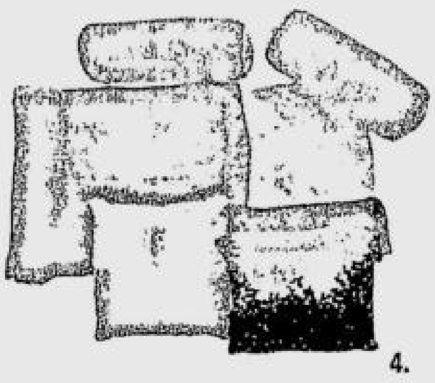

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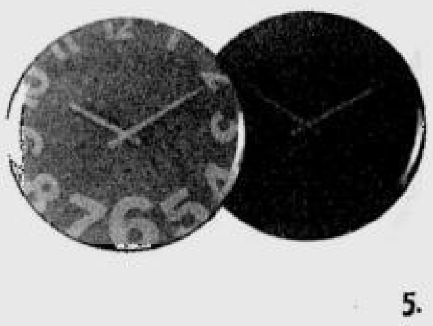

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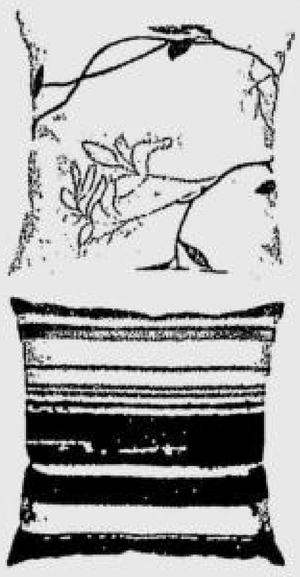

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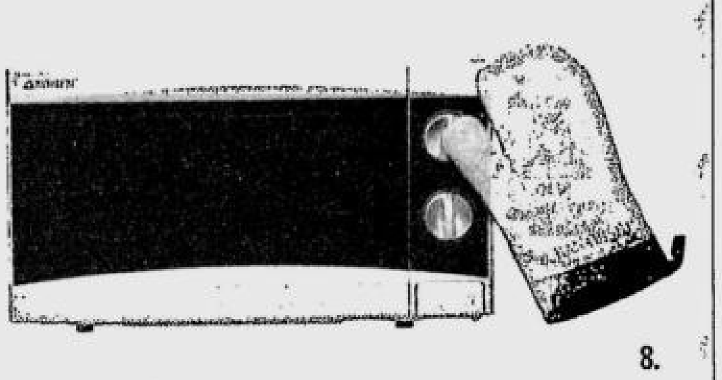

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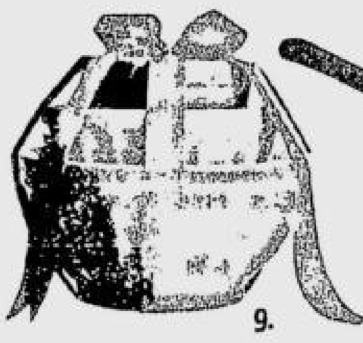

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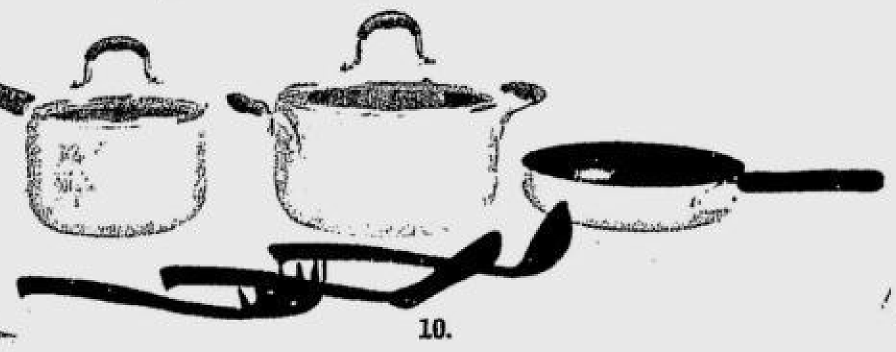

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Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

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ASIA PACIFIC TECHNOLOGY EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, INC. 3 Humabon Place, Magallanes, Makati City	Carl Malcolm Hattley British	Visiting Faculty
LIFE GAMES TRADING CO. LTD. 303-305 Lavezares St., Tondo, Manila	Ronglei Ji Chinese	Technical Consultant
ACCENTURE, INC. MSE Bldg., Ayala Ave., Makati City	Arun Menon Indian	Project Senior Manager/Operations Director
HUAWEI TECHNOLOGIES PHILIPPINES INC. 53/F PBCom Tower, Ayala Ave., Makati City	Youjin Tang Chinese	NWP Manager
ERICSSON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, INC. 20/F Net2 Square, 3rd Ave. cor. 28th St., Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City	Lars Anders Larsson Swedish	Technical Director
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Ravinder Dubb Indian	Bookkeeper
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Hardev Singh Indian	Marketing Manager for Accounts
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Rajwinder Kaur Indian	Assistant Manager
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Jagjit Johal Indian	Assistant Manager
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Harbhajan Singh Indian	Operation Manager
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Parminder Kaur Indian	Branch Manager
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Gurbachan Singh Indian	Supervisor
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Sarabjit Kaur Indian	Consultant
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RAYS OF HOPE TRADING LTD. CO. 982 Tomas Pinpin St., Binondo, Manila	Jiabao Chen Chinese	Supervisor
JE SE GROUP OF COMPANIES PHILS. CORPORATION 3/F Unit 7 Legaspi Tower 300, P. Ocampo St., Malate, Manila	Tae Sik Han Korean	Supervisor
MICROSOFT PHILIPPINES, INC. 17/F 6750 Ayala Office Tower, Ayala Ave., Makati City	Silas Yu Canadian	Services Lead
SPARTEC INTERNATIONAL MARKETING INC. U-113 Santillan Bldg., 7441 Santillan St., Pio del Pilar, Makati City	Zulkefli Bin Mohd Zain Malaysian	President
MAKATI SHANGRI-LA HOTEL & RESORT INC. (MAKATI SHANGRI-LA MANILA) Ayala Avenue cor. Makati Avenue, Makati City	Yoshio Ishikawa Japanese	Japanese Restaurant Manager
OSG-NNA SHIP MANAGEMENT SERVICES., INC. 1011 Rosadel Bldg., Metropolitan Avenue, Makati City	Eduard Tkalcic Croatian	President
NUBEEDA TRAVEL & TOURS SERVICES, INC. Unit 1105 Marbella I Bldg., 2223 Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	Minsuk Kim Korean	Tour Manager
NUBEEDA TRAVEL & TOURS SERVICES, INC. Unit 1105 Marbella I Bldg., 2223 Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	Jaehwan You Korean	Assistant Tour Manager
ACQUIRE ASIA PACIFIC PHILIPPINES INC. 24/F Trafalgar Plaza, 105 H.V. Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Brian Scott Kidder American	Senior Program Manager
XREIGN TECHNOLOGY INC. 10/F Salcedo Towers, 169 HV Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Raoul Blautzik German	Senior Vice President
ACQUIRE ASIA PACIFIC (PHILS.) INC. 24/F Trafalgar Plaza, 105 H.V. Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Dana Fredrick Andel American	Country Head
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Piñas City	Joga Singh Indian	Technical Supervisor
LUCKY DHILLON ENTERPRISES INC. B2 L1 Mercury St., Mapayapa Vill., Pulang Lupa Uno, Las Pinas City	Jasbir Singh Indian	Sales Consultant
*** SPRINT INTERNATIONAL, INC.** 1000 East Service Rd., Km. 19.8 So. Superhighway, Cupang Muntinlupa, City	Chandru Nathurmal Mahtani Indian	President
STEEL PENCIL PHILIPPINES LTD., INC. 2/F 388 Bldg., 79 Kamuning Rd., Quezon City	Linda Catherine Craw New Zealand	** Branch Office Administrator

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO G. AGRAVANTE
OIC, Regional Director

* This should have been included in the Notice of Filing for Application for AEP published on October 2, 2007.
** The position should have read as stated, and not as published on October 12, 2007

(PDI – December 19, 2007)

'Gov't tool,' censors body accused over X rating

From page A1

MENDIOLA
a film by
sine patriyotiko SIPAT

THE FILM got an X rating for its alleged "tendency to incite rebellion and sedition."

tive tool for the suppression of free speech and expression."

Not fit for public viewing

According to the MTRCB Implementing Rules and Regulations, an X-rated film is "not fit for public viewing."

National Artist for Literature Bienvenido Lumbera, a founding member of the critics' group, Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino, has joined the two legislators' protest, along with filmmakers Carlitos Siguion Reyna, Anna Isabelle Matutina, Kiri Dalena, Chytz Jimenez and RJ Mabilin.

The group said they were disputing the censors' ruling that "Rights" contained scenes that "undermine faith and confidence [in] the government and duly constituted authorities."

It wasn't true, either, that "Mendiola" had a "tendency to incite rebellion and sedition," the protesters insisted.

Neither was the board's claim, they said, that "A Day in the Life of Gloria" was "libelous and defamatory to the good name and reputation of the President of the Philippines."

"Rights" got the X rating on Sept. 19; the two others, on Dec. 4.

Chair's position: Black prop

MTRCB Chair Marissa Laguardia yesterday said in a phone interview that she was standing by the decision of the review committees in both instances.

Board member Dick de Leon, head of the committee of three that reviewed "Mendiola" and "A Day in the Life," said the two films had violated MTRCB implementing rules and regulations, thus the X rating.

RJ Mabilin's "Gloria," produced by Southern Tagalog Exposure, is a satire on President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration. "Mendiola," a documentary produced by Sine Patriyotiko, exposes police brutality against those who participate in rallies.

"These two films are libelous and ... too one-sided," De Leon told the INQUIRER in a phone interview yesterday. He said they were definitely "black propaganda."

De Leon noted that "Gloria" made fun of Ms Arroyo. "In the film, *humahaba ang ilong ng* President (her nose kept growing)," he said.

He added that a portion in "Mendiola" could also be constituted as a violation of Presidential Decree No. 603, (Child and Youth Welfare Code). He explained, "The film featured children without the children's consent."

Link to Marcos regime

Maza and Ilagan linked the MTRCB decision on the three films to the political environment of the Ferdinand Marcos' iron-fist regime, during which the board was established.

"The MTRCB operates on a decree created by a regime that was on the verge of collapse," the two lawmakers said in a joint statement. "Its intentions were as clear then as they are now—to prevent the proliferation of political opinion and expression."

In their resolution, Maza and Ilagan asked the House committee on public information, headed by Manila Rep. Bienvenido Abante, to look into the offending ratings.

Second review

Laguardia refused to further comment on the subject because, she said, "The producers could still apply for a second review."

De Leon clarified: "If the producers volunteer to take out some of the very offensive scenes, then maybe the X rating could be lifted upon second review."

Witness testifies in court UP coed chained to bed

From page A1

legedly abducted with the women. The mothers are seeking the release of the three.

The Supreme Court earlier issued a writ of amparo directing the appellate court to conduct a hearing on the mothers' petition to determine if there is basis to grant their plea for the protection of their daughters.

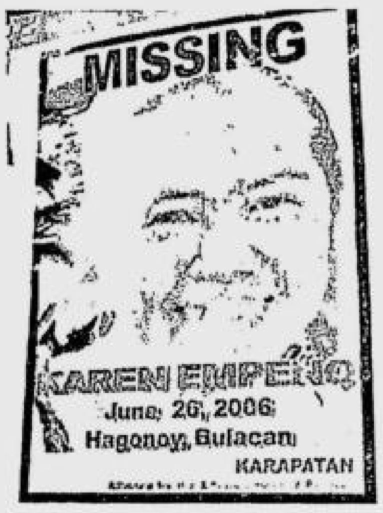
Cadapan, 30, a community organizer for Anakbayan, and Empeño, 23, a member of the leftist League of Filipino Students, were allegedly abducted in June 2006 along with Merino, 57.

Manalo, 33, and his brother Reynaldo, 23, were allegedly abducted from their homes in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, in February 2006 by troops of the paramilitary Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu).

The Manalo brothers, who have been accused of being guerrillas of the communist New People's Army and of killing a Cafgu member, escaped reportedly from military detention in August and are now under amparo protection.

The military has been accused of involvement in the kidnapping of the students and their companion and of the Manalo brothers—a charge denied by the military.

Manalo yesterday testified he first saw the UP students at Camp Tecson in Bulacan, which was used by the 24th Infantry Battalion, in September last year.



HAVE YOU SEEN HER? Karen Empeno is one of two UP students missing since June 26, 2006. PDI PHOTO

He said he met Cadapan first and added that he managed to talk to her because he had been ordered to clean the barracks where they were detained.

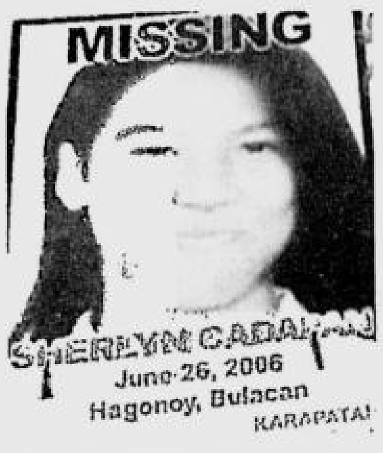
They talked freely

"We could talk and exchange stories freely. Sherlyn was in chains, but I was not. I was the one who cleaned the room," Manalo testified.

Manalo said Cadapan's foot was chained to a double-deck bed.

He said he and Cadapan, who wore fatigue shorts and a T-shirt, talked about their lives, and that the student had mentioned her parents. She told him that she had been abducted by the military.

Empeño and Merino arrived at Camp Tecson two days after he met Cadapan, Manalo said. They were brought to a separate room. He said Cadapan told him that she recognized their voices.



ALSO MISSING and abducted on the same day as Empeno is Sherlyn Cadapan. PDI PHOTO

Under questioning, Manalo narrated that he, his brother and the UP students were later brought to Limay, Bataan, from Camp Tecson.

Captives moved around

He said he was unsure if the place in Limay was a military camp because what he saw were nipa huts. The Manalo brothers and the UP students also were brought to a safehouse in Iba, Zambales, Manalo said.

Later, the group was returned to Limay, where the students were separated from Reynaldo Manalo. He last saw the UP students in June.

Manalo also identified Cadapan, Empeño and an Oscar Leuterio through pictures shown to him by Rex Fernandez, the lawyer of the students' mothers. Manalo said he saw the three while in detention.

Leuterio was allegedly abducted in April last year and had testified that he saw the students in a Nueva Ecija military camp in June 2006.

Jonas Burgos case

On the case of missing activist Jonas Burgos, his mother Edita announced yesterday that she would petition the Court of Appeals today to issue a writ of amparo and order the military to release him immediately in a bid "to fast-track our search for him."

The son of the late press freedom icon Jose "Joe" Burgos Jr. was kidnapped from a shopping mall in Quezon City on April 28. His family said the military was responsible.

In Iloilo City, the families of two abducted activists filed on Monday with the Regional Trial Court a petition for a writ of amparo to compel the government to release Ma. Luisa Posa-Dominado and Nilo Arado and to look into places where they may be detained.

Arado and Dominado were abducted in Oton town in Iloilo on April 12 after their vehicle was ambushed. Their companion, human rights worker Jose Ely Garachico, was shot and seriously wounded and was left behind. *With reports from TJ Burgonio and Nestor P. Burgos Jr., Inquirer Visayas*

THE MANALO BROTHERS testify at an Amparo hearing on Tuesday for the missing UP students. PDI PHOTO FILE

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
Regional Office No. IV-A
3rd Flr., Andenson Bldg. II, Brgy. Parian, Calamba City

December 19, 2007

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s.

Name and Address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National/Citizenship	Position
1. **PHIL-JH TEXTILE CORPORATION** Highway 2000, Brgy. San Juan, Taytay, Rizal	Mr. Myung Chul Kim/ Korean	Operations Manager
2. **HOFFEN INDUSTRIES CORPORATION** Brgy. Paliparan, Dasmariñas, Cavite	Mr. Wenguang Li/ Chinese	Pattern Technician
3. **PHILIPPINE GOLF & LEISURE, INC.** Don Celso Tuazon Ave., Antipolo City	Mr. Seounghwan Kim/ Korean	President
4. **PHILIPPINE AUTO COMPONENTS, INC.** CIP I, Canlubang, Calamba City	Mr. Shinichi Fujii/ Japanese	Vice President for Inspection Department
5. **PHILIPPINE AUTO COMPONENTS, INC.** CIP I, Canlubang, Calamba City	Mr. Makoto Hirota/ Japanese	Vice President for Production Department
6. **HYSONIC PHILS., INC.** CIP2, Tulo, Calamba City	Mr. Jong Dea Kim/ Korean	Production Manager
7. **ENGLISH TRAINING INSTITUTE, INC.** Mangubat Ave., Dasmariñas, Cavite	Mr. Moon Hwan Oh/ Korean	Planning & Coordination Manager

If you have any information/objection to the above-mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

ATTY. RICARDO S. MARTINEZ, SR., CESO III
Regional Director

(PDI–December 19, 2007)

PHILIPPINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION and PHILIPPINE DENTAL ASSOCIATION

Position Paper on Cheap Medicine Bills in Senate and Congress

The primary objective of Senate Bill No. 1658 and House Bill 2844 is to ensure availability of medicines at low or affordable cost.

We, the Philippine Medical Association (PMA) and the Philippine Dental Association (PDA), fully endorse measures to reduce medicine prices. ***We strongly support Senate Bill No. 1658 and House Bill No. 2844 in so far as amending the Intellectual Property Code RA 8293 is concerned. We, however, object to the provision of Sec. 29 of HB 2844 Amending Section 6 of RA 6675 otherwise known as the Generics Act of 1988.*** This amendment removes the physicians' and dentists' prerogative and discretion to include the brand name of drugs in their prescription.

The PMA and PDA believe that a necessary component in delivering an adequate Health Care System is the fiduciary doctor-patient relationship. Guided by the Hippocratic Oath, physicians and dentists utilize all their technical knowledge, skills, and expertise to give the best to their patients. They are likewise accountable for all their professional acts to their patients, peers, medical organizations, and to the State. Only physicians and dentists are empowered by the State to perform this awesome task and responsibility.

The proposed amendment to the Generics Act relegates the physicians' and dentists' task and responsibility to the drugstore salesperson. This puts the patients' and general public's health at a great risk, unnecessarily.

Drugs of the same generic name may differ in terms of therapeutic efficacy and safety. Only the physician and dentist, who have the experience and the expertise to recognize the clinical responses of success, treatment, failure, or idiosyncratic manifestation of drugs and drug interactions, have the competence to recognize the same in his or her patient.

The government must also strengthen the capability of the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) to assure strict compliance with the standards of safety, efficacy, and quality of pharmaceutical products. This is a prerequisite to the success of the Cheaper Medicine Bill. Hence, BFAD must be provided enough resources to ensure that its operations are at par with international standards.

Available data shows that not all drugstores are manned by or are under the licensed pharmacists' direct operational supervision and control. Delegating the power of discretion on drug selection to the salesperson with no or limited knowledge of drugs and their interaction, poses and creates danger to public health and safety. Any weakness on the part of BFAD in performing its mandate to supervise and regulate medicines while transferring discretion on drug selection from the physician and dentist to the drugstore salesperson could spell disaster to the safety of Filipino consumers. Public safety is, and should be, non-negotiable.

Only physicians and dentists are accountable legally, morally, and ethically for the success or failure of their treatment. Hence, while we, the Philippine Medical Association and Philippine Dental Association, support the two proposed legislative measures to lower the prices of medicine, we oppose in strongest terms the Amendment of Section 6 of the Generics Act. The amendment is a great disservice to the Filipino people.

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The Philippine Medical Association is the umbrella organization of the medical profession in our country with 118 Component Societies under the 17 regions, 8 Specialty Divisions, 55 Specialty Societies, and 37 Affiliate Societies.

San Miguel to issue response upon receipt of Palace EO

By Michael Lim Ubac

SAN MIGUEL CORP., WHOSE AFfiliate, San Miguel Foods Inc., owns the disputed property in Sumilao, Bukidnon, yesterday said it would issue a formal response only after it had received a copy of President Macapagal-Arroyo's executive order.

The order will take effect in 15 days if SMC does not contest it in court, according to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Ms Arroyo's spokesperson.

"I think that's to be expected. This can be the subject of a motion for reconsideration," said Bunye. But he added that he expected the Department of Agrarian Reform to defeat any legal appeal by the food and beverage giant with "one-foot-high" documents.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol conceded that "we have to wait for the finality of the order."

"If there would be an appeal, a motion for reconsideration, the effectivity [of the order] is suspended until after the resolution of the motion," Apostol said.

"And if there would be an appeal to the Court of Appeals, the complainant must get a temporary restraining order. Otherwise, the order will be implemented," he said.

Bunye said SMC would receive due compensation. But he did not cite an amount.

Asked about the certificates of land ownership award that had been issued to the farmers prior to SMFI's acquisition of the property, he said: "These are details that will have to be dealt with by the DAR. [From] our end, what is important is a case that has been pending ... has been resolved, and resolved in favor of the petitioner-farmers."

Bunye also said Ms Arroyo's order was based on the DAR's recommendation to cancel the land-use conversion order because of the "violation of conditions" committed by SMFI. *With a report from Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson*

Weary feet, happy faces; now, hard part begins

From page A1

Ricardo Saludo, Bunye delivered the news and a copy of the executive order to the farmers, who had stayed overnight at the College of the Holy Spirit just outside Malacañang to await Ms Arroyo's decision.

"I believe this revocation order is a significant first step and gives teeth to the intention of the President to really help the farmers," Bunye told reporters after the dialogue with the farmers that lasted nearly two hours.

FARMERS IN TEARS Napoleon Merida Jr. (center), Mary Ann Cedino (left) and Marlyn Ligmon Trinidad are teary-eyed as they celebrate after their leaders arrived from a second meeting with President Arroyo at around 12 midnight on Monday.

LYN RILLON

Grateful but wary

But Bunye and Saludo were peppered with questions by the farmers, some of whom said they would not return to Bukidnon until the property was actually transferred to them.

"We want assurance from the government that the land will truly be ours. Although we're grateful, we're also wary of the decision because in the past, many decisions favorable to us were reversed," Napoleon Merida Jr., chair of the San Vicente Landless Farmers' Association, told reporters.

His uncle, Samuel Merida, said that when he and the other farmers left Sumilao in October to march all the way to Manila, "we vowed that when we return, it would be to land that is rightfully ours."

"It would be a great Christmas gift for us and our families if our case is acted on quickly by the government. We could begin planting immediately for the livelihood of our families and the colleagues we left behind," Samuel Merida told the INQUIRER.

Lawyer Manuel said the farmers were adamant that the construction of the SMFI hog farm on the disputed property be stopped at once.

"They're a bit sad because many points in the order were not clear. They have reservations," said Manuel, a member of the Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal.

Weight for the petition

Manuel said the farmers were also dissatisfied because SMFI could still contest the order all the way to the Supreme Court, thus prolonging the dispute.

At the dialogue, Bunye reminded the farmers that they went to the Palace on Monday to seek the revocation of the conversion order, and that Ms Arroyo granted their request after considering the DAR findings and recommendations.

He said the construction of a hog farm on the property was the main reason the land-use conversion order was revoked.

Asked at one point by Napoleon Merida whether the revocation order meant that SMFI operations on the property would be stopped, Bunye said the order would be "the legal basis for the DAR to give in to the other things that you are asking for."

"In other words," he said, "it is your lawyer who will submit the petition to the DAR, and this order would give weight to your petition."

The farmers asked Bunye whether a cease-and-desist order to SMFI from the DAR was forthcoming, and why it was not included in Ms Arroyo's executive order. They told him that they went to Malacañang to also seek a cease-and-desist order.

Bunye said he had no ready answer. But he added that he and the farmers' lawyer both understood that the issuance of a cease-and-desist order "could be the second step."

Asked whether Ms Arroyo would give Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman a deadline to act on the requested order, Bunye said her "message" should be very clear to Pangandaman, who was present at her two meetings with the farmers—that the case was "a top priority of the President."

The farmers also told Bunye of their fear that the process would take time, as shown, they said, by their past experience with Pangandaman.

No tears of joy

Bunye said he could only speak for Ms Arroyo: "The action of the President speaks louder. The fact that the President met with the farmers, with the clergy ... She really spent time [on the case] and followed it up until this morning with Executive Secretary Ermita ... So the President's interest is there."

Ermita signed the order at 12:10 p.m. "by authority of the President."

Josel Gonzales, the farmers' media coordinator, said their reaction was "subdued" when they first heard news of the cancellation of the land-use conversion order via text message at past noon.

"They welcomed the decision and are thankful because this is a big step for them to realize their goals, but there was no jumping, hugs and tears of joy. They said they've been traumatized because they still remember victories in the past that were later taken away," he said.

Gonzales was referring to the certificates of land ownership award distributed to the farmers in 1994, which were revoked two years later when Malacañang, through then Executive Secretary Ruben Torres, approved the conversion of the property into an agro-industrial park.

In a statement, the Sumilao farmers described Ms Arroyo's executive order as "a big milestone in our quest to reclaim our land."

But the farmers said they remained "disturbed."

"While we rejoice at this victory, we are aware that this revocation is but a partial redress of the grave injustice that was committed against us that led to the dispossession of our land 10 years ago. This redress is already long overdue," they said.

The farmers reiterated that they would not return to Bukidnon despite Ms Arroyo's order:

"We will make our presence felt at the [DAR] and we will not leave until we are finally installed in our land. We reiterate our solemn vow that the first ground that we will step on in Bukidnon will be the land that we will call our own. We shall continue to walk until the day when we will walk freely on the land that we own."

The farmers expressed "heartfelt gratitude" to the civil society organizations, parishes, religious groups, schools and the Catholic Church that "took our cause as their own."

'That's the procedure'

In Malacañang, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol told reporters that the land would eventually be handed to the "old tenants," the Sumilao farmers, and SMFI would be paid accordingly.

"That's the procedure. The one who will pay immediately will be Land Bank [of the Philippines]," Apostol said.

Asked if this was a Christmas gift to the farmers, Bunye said: "All the actions of the President are being done as a matter of justice."

The farmers said they would return this morning to their encampment in front of the DAR central office in Quezon City.

Samuel Merida—the president of the Mapadayonong Panaghiusa sa mga Lumad Alang sa Damlag, which organized the farmers in Sumilao and set up a cooperative to give them livelihood assistance—said he and his colleagues "continue to believe in due process and in the CARP process."

He added: "We want to be prioritized because it has been a long wait for us. We want the process of implementation [of the President's order] sped up."

Napoleon Merida said they would seek an audience with Pangandaman to ask him to immediately issue the revocation of the land-use conversion order and notice of CARP coverage.

He said the farmers were wary of Pangandaman because the latter had earlier recognized SMFI's ownership of the property and did not halt its development projects on the disputed land.

'Land is life'

Samuel Merida dismissed comments that the farmers might not be able to administer the land if it were returned to them.

"Comments that we will not be able to till our land are unfair and belittle the farmers' abilities. A farmer will do all he can so that his land will be productive. Land is the farmer's life," he said. *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*

Church to monitor farmers' case all the way

From page A1

property into a hog farm.

"She should have sought a compromise where everybody will have the opportunity to pursue their interests," said Aquino, whose family owns Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, a vast sugar estate wracked by a bitter dispute with farmers.

Honasan, chair of the Senate committee on agrarian reform, said the chamber would look into Ms Arroyo's executive order in order to determine its "impact."

"The government is responsible for the entire country and not just Sumilao, a small neglected town," he said, adding that "not only 50 farmers are involved there."

Productivity

Honasan said the main issue in the Sumilao case was how to maximize the productivity of the land.

He said Ms Arroyo's decision "might set a precedent that will just [do away with] the issue of productivity."

"Are we redistributing the land itself or a means of production for the benefit of [all] farmers [covered by] the entire agrarian reform program?" he said.

Honasan said the planned Senate inquiry should assess the impact of Ms Arroyo's decision on local governments and on industrial investors like SMFI.

"We should hear all sides of the issue," he said.

Aquino said there was no question that the SMFI investment would have a dramatic impact on the economy of the local community concerned.

"The corn farmers will have another trader buying their produce. [SMFI] will bring roads and power to their community.

MIDNIGHT TREAT Late Monday night after a second meeting with President Arroyo, farmers Linda Ligmon and Hilda San-ahan share the great good news with Sister Vic of the College of the Holy Spirit, the Sumilao farmers host for the evening.

LYN RILLON

These would redound to more opportunities for more people in the community," he said.

Aquino also said the government should ask itself what would happen if the facilities invested in the area were given to the farmers.

"I guess they would just revert back to previous practices and lose a chance for economic development," he said.

According to Bishop Pabillo, the Church's main role is to give voice to the poor.

He said the Church's assistance would depend on what the Sumilao farmers would need—giving voice to their cause, solidarity, or connecting them to the proper government offices.

"The good thing about them is that they all talk about their decisions," the bishop said. "Whatever their decision will be, if we see that it is right, we will respect and support it."

Pabillo, along with other priests, nuns and seminarians, escorted the Sumilao farmers in their march to Malacañang yesterday.

The farmers brought a letter from Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, who, since his days as bishop of Malaybalay, Bukidnon, had been supporting the farmers' claim to the Sumilao property.

Preferential option for poor

Pabillo said the role of the Church in the case had been only to make the meeting and subsequent consultation between Ms Arroyo and the farmers possible: "The farmers were the ones who talked. We were only there *para pagtagpuin sila.*"

Three other prelates—Jaro (Iloilo) Archbishop and CBCP president Angel Lagdameo, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz, and Novaliches Bishop Emeritus Teodoro Bacani—have also voiced support for the Sumilao farmers.

They stressed the Church's preferential option for the poor and its support for the CARP as called for by its social teachings.

Hard part begins: 4-step process to take many months

From page A1

Department of Agrarian Reform official said.

"In a sense yes," Rene Herrera, undersecretary for operations, said when asked if the farmers were back to square one.

"Because we have to review if those awarded with Cloa (certificate of land ownership) are still qualified as some of them may have left the area."

First step

Following President Macapagal-Arroyo's order, the first step for DAR would be to issue a notice of coverage to the landowner, San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), informing it that the landholding had been placed under CARP, according to Herrera.

But the department could not issue the notice yet until this had become final and executory, he said. (SMFI has 15 days to file a motion for reconsideration with either the Office of the President or the courts.)

"Once the order is final and executory, we will proceed," Herrera said in an interview by phone last night.

Second, third steps

The next step would be for DAR to identify and select the beneficiaries. "There will be a rescreening because some of them may have left the area. So from the farmers' ranks, we will identify who are more qualified today," he said.

The third step would entail the survey of the land and its subdivision based on the number of beneficiaries, and productivity of the property, among other things.

The first three steps could be undertaken simultaneously, according to the undersecretary.

Fourth step

The fourth step would be for DAR to forward the claim folder to Land Bank of the Philippines so it can assess the value of the property and pay the landowner in cash and trust bonds.

Once this is completed, what follows is the registration of the title in the name of the Republic of the Philippines, and the registration of the individual Transfer Certificate of Title containing the Cloa, according to Herrera.

The Cloa will then be issued to the farmer beneficiaries. Only then can the farmers till the land.

"The whole process can take eight months to one-and-a half years," Herrera said. "If there are no problems, we can finish it in eight months."

Even if the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law expires in June 2008 and is not extended, DAR would press ahead with the coverage of the estate, along with other landholdings with notice of coverage.

Big part of battle won

"DAR is committed to complete coverage of landholdings which are issued with notice of coverage beyond 2008," Herrera said.

While they're back to square one, the farmers have "won a big part of the battle," he added, referring to the President's order placing the contested land under CARP. "This is a big victory for them."

GMA rating slips some more despite Erap pardon

ONE OUT OF TWO FILIPINOS APPROVED of President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to pardon former President and convicted plunderer Joseph Estrada. Nevertheless, Ms Arroyo's satisfaction rating fell to net -16 from the previous quarter's net -11, according to a survey by the Social Weather Stations.

"[T]he President did not gain from the pardon because those who agreed with it were even more dissatisfied with her than those who disagreed with it," SWS said in a statement released yesterday.

According to the SWS, majority or 54 percent of respondents agreed that Ms Arroyo's decision to pardon Estrada after he was convicted of plunder "was good for the country." About one in every five or 23 percent disagreed.

Among those who opposed the pardon, 36 percent were satisfied with the President's performance while 48 percent were dissatisfied which gave Ms Arroyo a net satisfaction rating of -12.

Among those who supported the pardon, her net satisfaction rating was net -22, with 30 percent satisfied and 52 percent dissatisfied with her performance.

The survey, conducted from Nov. 30 to Dec. 3, showed that 32 percent were satisfied and 48 percent were dissatisfied with the President's performance.

In the survey conducted last September, 34 percent were satisfied and 45 percent dissatisfied with her performance.

"The President's net ratings were close to neutral in the first and second quarters of 2007, before returning to negative levels again," SWS said.

Net satisfaction rating is the difference between the number of respondents who are satisfied and dissatisfied.

SWS attributed the decrease in the President's satisfaction rating to "loss of support" in Mindanao and the Visayas, and "worsening dissatisfaction" in Metro Manila.

The President's satisfaction rating in Metro Manila "worsened substantially" from net -24 (28 percent satisfied, 52 percent dissatisfied) in September to net -34 (25 percent satisfied, 59 percent dissatisfied) in the latest survey.

The survey was conducted from Nov. 30 to Dec. 3 using face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the balance of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research

BI exceeds '07 target

THE CONTINUED influx of foreigners into the country has enabled the Bureau of Immigration (BI) to surpass its 2007 collection target, posting an income of more than P1.56 billion from January to November.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said the 11-month collection was higher by P180 million than the P1.3 billion target for the period.

"As of the end of November, the BI has surpassed the P1.46-billion income that it registered in 2006, thus maintaining the steady rise in the agency's revenues over the past five years," Libanan said.

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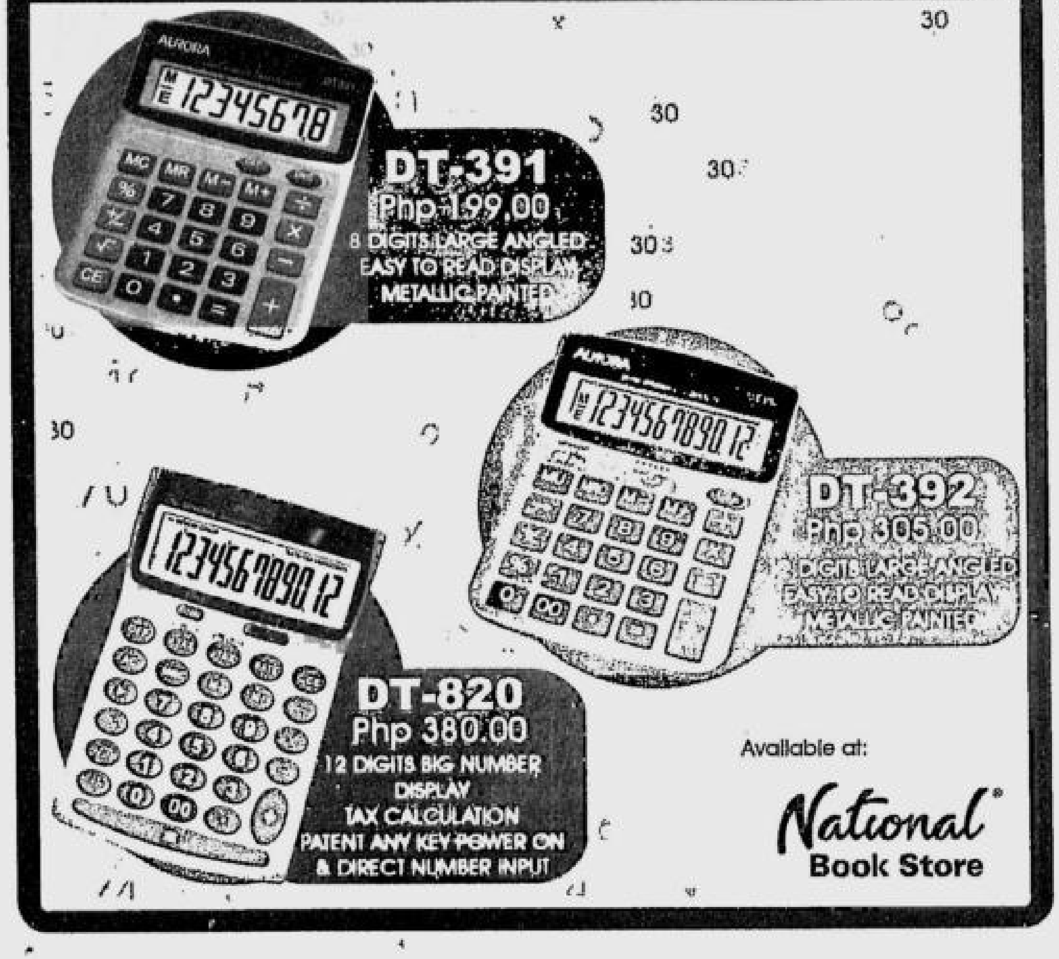

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PAF officer shoots aide over drinks in Basilan

By Tarra Quismundo

A PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE OFFICER SENT to Mindanao to lead the PAF's humanitarian efforts in Basilan is under military custody after he fatally shot his right-hand man.

Lt. Col. Arturo Apud, 54, is confined to quarters at the 3rd Air Division in Zamboanga City for the shooting of his assistant, Capt. Jesus Fernandez, 44, on Saturday.

"Unfortunately, they had a misunderstanding, they had an exchange. These things are not supposed to happen but it's unfortunate," said PAF chief Lt. Gen. Horacio Tolentino, who was reached by phone while visiting airmen in Palawan yesterday.

Lt. Col. Epifanio Panzo Jr., Air Force spokesperson, said Apud headed the PAF engineering brigade based at the 355th Aviation Engineering Wing in Pampanga that was sent to Basilan to undertake public works projects as part of the government's humanitarian efforts alongside the continuing combat operations in the South.

Citing an initial field report, Panzo said Apud and Fernandez had a heated argument while having drinks in their barracks in Sumisip, Basilan, at around 9:30 p.m. on Dec. 15.

"They dared each other... they both drew their guns, but Fernandez was beaten to the draw," Panzo said.

Fernandez suffered bullet wounds in the body from Apud's M-16 rifle. His remains will be airlifted to Manila on a C-130, Panzo said.

"We'll have to investigate further to determine what really happened. [Apud's liability] will depend on the circumstances," Tolentino said.

He said Apud may be transferred to the Villamor Air Base stockade in Pasay City while the shooting is being investigated.

Despite the incident, the PAF's engineering projects in Basilan will continue as planned, Tolentino said.

Carolino, former Army officer; 80

COL. JEREMIAS "JIMMY" CAROLINO, FORmer director of Century Bank and the Philippine National Bank remittance center in the United States, died on Sept. 30 in Glendale, California, at the age of 80, his family has announced.

Carolino, of Paete, Laguna, graduated from the Philippine Military Academy in 1951 and was a member of the Corps of Engineers of the Philippine Army.

His widow Adoracion said a memorial service was held for Carolino at the Burbank First United Methodist Church followed by the rendering of military honors by members of the Philippine Military Academy Association, Southern California chapter, headed by Cavalier Pete Cruz.

The flag that draped Carolino's casket was handed to his widow by Commodore Ramon Alcaraz.

Carolino is also survived by his sons Armand, Arnel, Arthur and Arcelino; daughters-in-law Beth Bailon, Linda San Miguel, Tina Briones and Annabelle Canos, and grandchildren Mark, Allan, Cristina, Adriel, Agean, Byron, Jeremy and Angeleah.

He served in the Korean War in 1952-54. Later, he worked on the construction of the Manila North Diversion Road (now the Northern Luzon Expressway). In 1972, then President Ferdinand Marcos appointed him general manager of the Food Terminal Inc. At the same time, he was appointed to the Asian Center for Development Administration, a United Nations agency based in Malaysia.

FROM P

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Jobless rate down in '07, says survey

By Michelle V. Remo

THE JOBLESS RATE DROPPED TO 6.3 PERcent of the labor force in October from 7.3 percent in the same month last year, in what the government said was a natural consequence of a robustly growing economy.

Based on the Labor Force Survey released yesterday by the National Statistics Office, there were some 2,261,700 unemployed persons in October out of a total labor force of 35.9 million, or 6.3 percent of all workers.

Conversely, the number of employed persons was 33,638,300 for an employment rate of 93.7 percent.

Myrna Asuncion, head of the National Economic and Development Authority policy and planning department, said the drop in the unemployment rate meant there was an increase in the number of people generating income. This supported the earlier report on the growth of the Philippine economy that beat most forecasts, she said.

Economic indicator

"More people are now earning income. This is a reflection of the economy's performance," Asuncion said in an interview.

The economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), grew by 7.1 percent year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2007. This has kept the economy on track to surpass the official growth target rate of between 6.1 and 6.7 percent for the entire year.

The GDP, the most common yardstick of a country's economic performance, is the sum of all goods produced and services rendered within an economy during a period.

The NSO said nearly half, or 48.8 percent, of all employed persons in October belonged to the services sector. The sector, which recorded the fastest growth among key sectors of the economy so far this year, includes the booming business process outsourcing (BPO) industry which counts call centers.

The latest data showed the services sector, boosted by the income generated by the BPO industry, grew 8.2 percent year-on-year from January to September this year, up greatly from the 6.1 percent recorded in the same period last year.

The agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector grew by 4.6 percent from January to September, while the industry sector (which includes manufacturing and mining) grew by 6.8 percent.

Police arrest Ernest Santiago murder suspect

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED ONE OF THREE alleged killers of lifestyle icon Ernest Santiago in Pagsanjan, Laguna, late Tuesday afternoon.

Pagsanjan Mayor George "E.R." Ejercito Estregan, however, would only identify the suspect as "Zosimo" because police were still on the trail of the two other suspects. Estregan said the three had been "very close" to Santiago.

He said the two suspects who were at large were seen at the wake for Santiago at Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park in Makati City.

Santiago's bloodied body was discovered in his bedroom in his Pagsanjan home on Sunday morning. He had apparently been struck in the head with a hard object. *Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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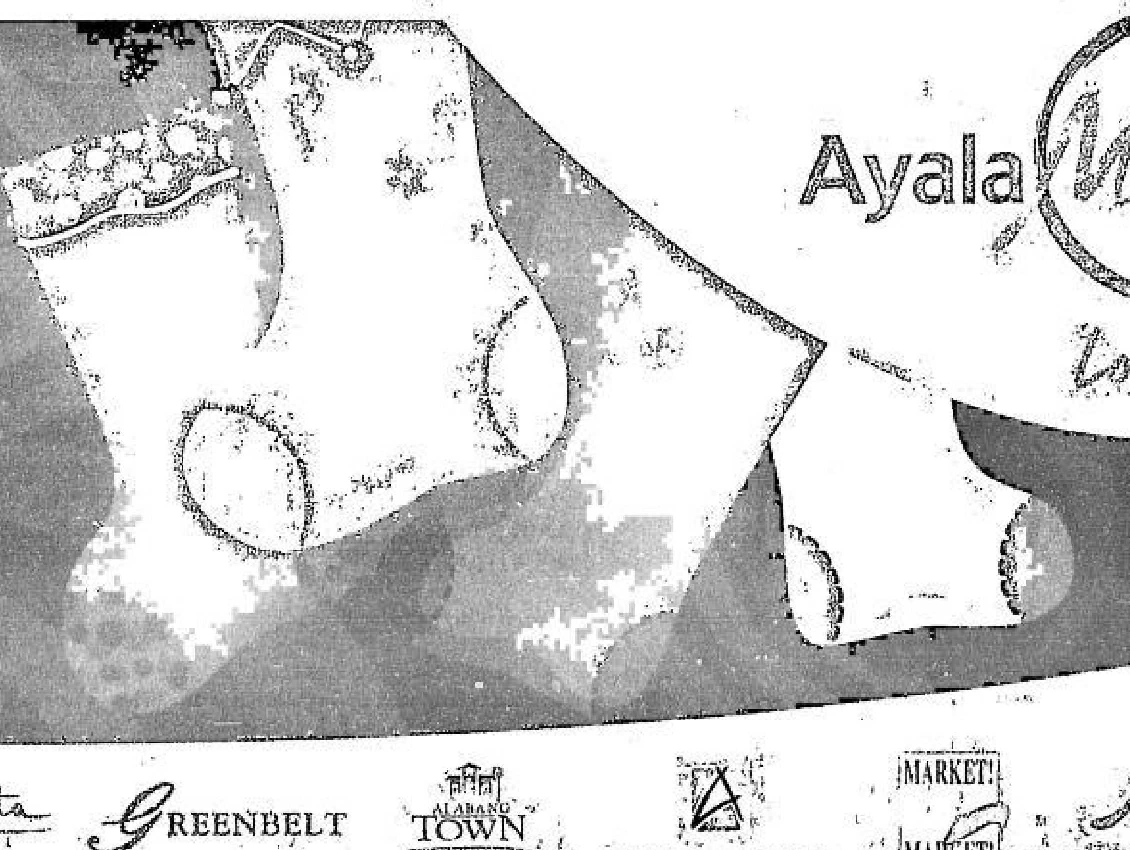

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Moral fakery

EDITORIAL

IN THE DICTUM IMMORTALIZED BY EULOGIO RODriguez, "politics is addition." And there is no greater believer in the wisdom of that statement than President Macapagal-Arroyo. While populist presidents believe in wholesale addition—in the summoning up, and manipulation of, public opinion—our operator-presidents believe in consolidating support, one leader at a time. The reason for this is that public opinion is fickle, but once earned (or bought) the support of individual leaders is much more predictable, if not dependable.

Traditional politicians, from Jose Avelino (of "What are we in power for?" fame) to Jose de Venecia, all know, too, that they are not saints—a convenient justification for wallowing in political sins. That being the case, the President pragmatically offers, not redemption, but survival—for herself, and her allies. With this offer comes what must be, for our political class, a welcome pragmatism that refuses to make value judgments on those allies. The priority is upholding the common devotion to power; the only obstacle is public opinion.

It is in this context that the hastily postponed pardon for convicted pedophile Romeo Jalosjos must be placed. He continues to be influential in his home province, and he has never been coy about supporting the President. Last weekend, when he almost regained his freedom, it came, not as a bolt of lightning out of the blue, but after the possibility, indeed, probability, of a pardon was dangled in the media for months.

The President may have feigned anger and surprise—shocked, shocked, she was, to hear of it!—but it was just that. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez obligingly looked for scapegoats in the lower levels of the bureaucracy. Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol was less mentally dishonest and said the pardon was withdrawn because of a public clamor. And the Palace, as a whole, tried to downplay the Jalosjos pardon by pointing to the administration's policy of granting clemency to all prisoners who reach the age of 70.

But the Palace confuses the forest for the trees. No one opposes clemency for aged prisoners in principle; but it betrays a wrong sense of principles if the policy ends up restoring freedom first to the most notorious convicts. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, for example, has identified 120 convicts who have reached that age, but who have yet to receive a pardon. Yet the energies of the government seem to focus, instead, on people like Jalosjos.

All things being equal, a convicted pedophile should be at the back of the line, not in front.

Our prison system is anchored on the modern idea that offenders must be punished by separation from society, but also given every chance to show contrition: the hope of reform should never dim except in the most heinous of cases. The President's policy, then, in light of this, betrays another flaw. It is a humanitarian policy but ignores the very real possibility that there may be offenders who deserve to be released, not just because of their age, but because of good behavior. However, nothing to encourage this has been done—which would serve as an incentive to the correctional, and not just punitive, role our jails should play.

Instead, the country once again fell victim to the cynical calculations of the authorities: that a controversial act, if done on a weekend, won't be noticed. To make sure of it, the action was leaked months in advance. The only surprise was that the public noticed, anyway, and objected, forcing a Palace retreat. As with all retreats, political or military, someone ends up left behind. In this case, Jalosjos.

Yet the former congressman knows he needs the President and that his value only comes in when she needs votes in the House of Representatives. She can afford to leave him dangling, but one thing is certain: she will find a way to soothe his ruffled feelings, though for now she will claim her feelings are as ruffled as the public's. If that isn't moral fakery, we don't know what is.

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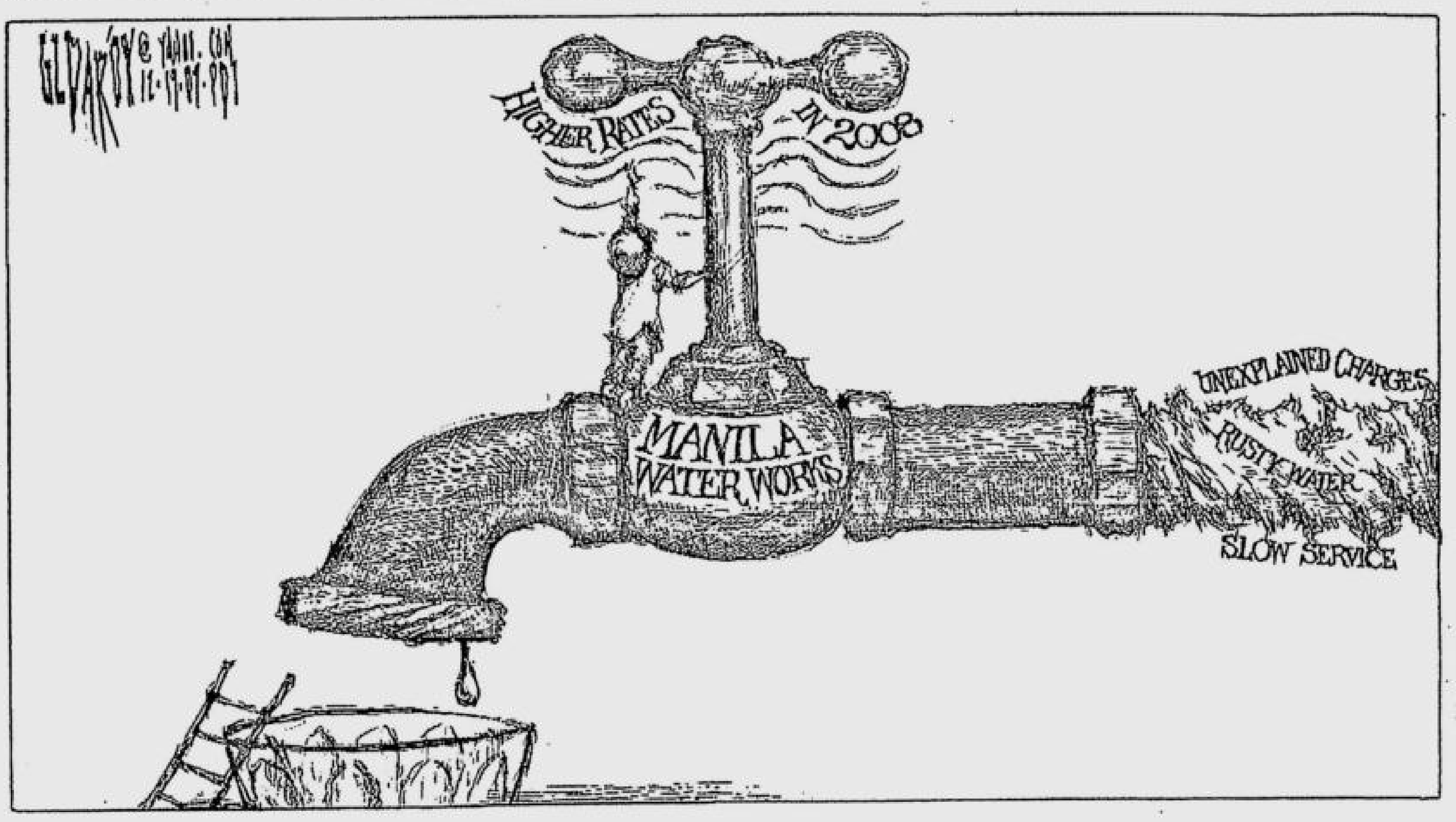

Villar and Garcia: Dismantle cartels

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

HOW CAN THE RAPIST OF AN 11-YEAR-OLD girl, sentenced to two life terms in prison, be released after serving only 14 years—years which were not all spent behind bars but outside of it? Romeo Jalosjos was allowed by prison authorities to build his own rest house in a subdivision in the outskirts of the New Bilibid Prisons.

Prisons Director Ricardo Dapat's excuse is that the subdivision is considered "still part of the reservation."

Doesn't that defeat the intent of the law, that convicted prisoners be confined behind bars? Lets face it, Jalosjos is a privileged prisoner inside Munti because he has plenty of money. While poor prisoners sleep on the bare cement floor, Jalosjos has his own rest house, with perhaps an air conditioner or at least electric fans; he has his own tennis court inside the prison and other privileges of wealth. The intent of the law is to make the convicted felon suffer inside prison to pay for his crime. Has that happened to Jalosjos?

Now prisons officials were about to release him prematurely, acting entirely on their own, without any orders from the President who is the only person authorized to grant executive clemency. The release papers were already finished and Jalosjos' constituents in Zamboanga del Norte were already celebrating for his homecoming. Luckily, the media reported his impending release and GMA, "upset" at the news (according to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez), ordered his continued confinement in prison.

Can prisons officials, without any direct orders from the President, release prisoners prematurely? I don't think so, but why has not the President scolded her prisons officials for this act? There are a lot of mysterious things going on inside the prisons, and this caper is just the latest.

How can such a miscarriage of justice happen? How did it come about? Because of GMA. She commuted Jalosjos' two life terms to 16 years. Gonzalez said what is in the mind of the President is that Jalosjos can be released when he reaches the age of 70. But Jalosjos will turn 70 only in 2010. So how come he was almost released last Dec. 16, without orders from Malacañang? Will wonders never cease?

* * *

Senate President Manny Villar was the lone guest at last Monday's Kapihan sa Manila, and he said he expects the Senate to pass "from three to five priority bills" before it adjourns today, the 2008 budget being the top priority. Asked about the Cheaper Medicines Bill which the Senate has long passed, Villar said he expected the House to pass its own version also today.

Asked about the differences between the two versions, the Senate president said the House version has price controls while the Senate version has none, relying on competition in the free market to force prices down. The House version, by the way, has been stalled by the objections of Cebu Rep. Pablo Garcia who claims the present version favors multinational pharmaceutical giants, which are responsible for the high prices of medicines in the first place.

Analyzing Garcia's objections, it seems he is right and the present version of the bill may indeed be a booby trap. It is not unusual for vested interests, when they cannot stop the passage of a bill, to have provisions inserted in the bill to punch loopholes in it. That has happened in the Oil Deregulation Law and in the Epira law that were, like the Cheaper Medicines Bill, intended to break the hold of cartels. In the Oil Deregulation Law, the transition period was shortened into a farce and price controls were abolished; in the Epira, the provision against cross ownership was abolished.

In the present Cheaper Medicines Bill, a provision was inserted requiring a presidential proclamation of an emergency before parallel importation can be made. In the Intellectual Property Code (IPC), that is not necessary—the government or an authorized third party can make parallel importations in the public interest. Another provision requires a patent holder's consent before others can experiment on the subject of the patent, when the "experimentation process" is not covered by patent restrictions in the IPC. Do you think a multinational company will give such consent?

Villar thinks an anti-trust law similar to that in the United States should be enacted to prevent cartels and monopolies. Enacting separate laws for each industry with cartels is slow, as we have seen, he said. Another cartel that should be dismantled, he agreed, is the cement cartel which is behind the high prices of cement that are hobbling the construction industry and putting homes beyond the reach of most Filipinos.

Cement being vital to the construction industry, it should be cheap, said Villar, who is in real estate development. But almost all of our cement factories are owned by a foreign-based cartel that has increased prices and persuaded the Department of Trade and Industry to impose high tariff rates on cheap, imported cement.

Steel, another vital component of construction, is also costly, Villar said, adding that he hopes our lone steel mill can be rehabilitated so we are not dependent on imported steel.

* * *

TRIVIA: Former Ambassador Roy Señeres, whom I cited in a previous column for saving Sarah Balabagan from execution but who was fired by GMA as head of the National Labor Relations Commission, texted me to say that he was not "fired."

"I resigned on June 25, 2005," he said, "after she scolded me in the Palace in front of some Cabinet officials, 'for meeting with US Ambassador Ricciardone and asking him to destabilize her.'"

* * *

Myther and Friends is holding its Christmas party tomorrow and asking those who are having a difficult time buying raffle prizes to donate cash instead.

Road to perdition

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I AGREE WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH GERRY Los Baños who wrote a letter here last Monday commenting on the incident where a cop fired a shot at former Gov. Josefina dela Cruz's car and mauled one of her drivers in an accompanying vehicle afterward. Los Baños says his sympathies were with the driver, Eduardo Magsakay, until he learned that the reason the cop, Jethro Lim, did so was that Magsakay, who was part of a convoy escorting Dela Cruz, had cut off Lim from overtaking the convoy and nearly sideswiped him.

Magsakay's defense was that he was merely following standard procedure in escorting VIPs, which is to regard anyone overtaking a convoy as a threat to security. Which provoked Los Baños to say: "Last I checked, roads were public property, with every licensed driver having equal right to them. What is it that gives government officials the idea that they, more than others, should be given the privilege of enjoying a larger space of the road?"

Los Baños recalled that he himself had been a victim of that same bullying tactics, his attempts to overtake a slow-moving Revo escorted by a motorcycle cop being thwarted violently by the Revo swerving to his side with the intention of flicking him off the road. His wife was with him at that time on the very side the Revo was threatening to ram into, and Los Baños reacted to it by blasting his horn. The Revo retorted by blaring out a siren. Fortunately for Los Baños, the confrontation got no further than that.

"How many Filipino drivers have been victimized by siren-blaring vehicles of senators, congressmen, mayors, etc? Aren't these convoys illegal in the first place? Why are the powers-that-be doing nothing while the law is being broken in such a visible and noisy manner? There are few proofs better than this that show that the rich and powerful in the Philippines are exempt from following the law."

I would hazard that the number of Filipino drivers who have been victimized that way is huge, given that every Christmas when traffic becomes an even bigger nightmare that topic inevitably crops up in all the parties I go to. It's everybody's pet peeve. Fortunately, storytellers have managed to live to tell their tale, though in some instances, only by the skin of their teeth. Or at least not without seeing a gun waved in their faces from the retracting windows of the Black Car.

I've been a victim of the same thing. I was going to the Ateneo some years ago, trying to make it on time for a talk through the early morning traffic, when I ran into a slow-moving parade of cars in Katipunan. My mind being occupied by my talk, I did not notice it was a convoy ferrying God-Knows-Whom. They were occupying a couple of lanes. As I tried to squeeze past them, such as that was possible with the battalion of cars, jeepneys and school buses, around me, I got loud honks from the convoy. One of the cars tried to cut me off, probably feeling doubly insulted by the idea of a battered-down, decade-old Mitsubishi EL intruding on what they presumed to be their sovereign space. I barged on anyway, but not before seeing the driver's window roll down and a face emerge its mouth spouting French. I rolled down my own window and raised a dirty finger at it.

I know I shouldn't do those things, but those are moments when you do not think. Which is also quite incidentally why I keep arguing against allowing guns in cars: They are an engraved invitation to mayhem. Fortunately for me, by the time this happened I was nearing the Ateneo gate and the light at the corner had just turned left (this was before the U-turns). Even more fortunately for me, the car did not follow me to the Ateneo. Though it would have been just as unfortunate for him, or worse, had he done so, as I would truly have crucified him afterward.

Most everyone I know has a horror story of this sort, which gets to be told especially at this time of year in gatherings. It never fails to stoke people to fury. So, to echo Los Baños' lament, why does this atrocity continue to bedevil us? Or more to the point, why do we allow it to do so?

Some time ago, Raul Gonzalez justified it by saying that public officials deserve the privilege because they are doing more important work than the ordinary citizens and should therefore not be deterred in any way from doing it. Trust that idiot to make idiotic statements like that. At the very least, what makes it idiotic is that if the current occupant of Malacañang is widely perceived as the most corrupt and murderous president in modern (and probably not just so) Philippine history, and if public officials, particularly appointive ones, are there to help her carry out those functions, then it behooves us to deter them in every possible way, not least by snarling them in traffic. That way they can steal and murder less. At the very most what's idiotic about it is that I, an ordinary citizen, do a lot more intelligent things in one day than Gonzalez will ever do in his lifetime.

There is no justification for it, and if you still need proof of it, you have this to show how over the last few years democracy has turned to autocracy, equality and fraternity have turned into rank and privilege, decency and consideration have turned into iniquity and oppression. To find comparisons for the way the convoys of Very Important Persons, or the Feeling Important Persons, demand to have a clear road ahead of them you have to go back to antiquity, to the time when Roman generals rode on chariots and their drivers lashed out with a whip at the slaves cluttering up the road to get out of the way. That situation on our roads today says a great deal about the road we've taken as a country of late.

The road to perdition.

How to avoid a populist demagogue

COMMENTARY

Denis Murphy

TOWARD THE END OF NOVEMBER, QUEEN Elizabeth told the Commonwealth leaders gathered in Uganda that they must listen carefully to the voices of the ordinary people in their countries. They must have gasped in astonishment: here was the queen of the country that had held their countries as colonies for centuries, telling them now to listen to what their people were saying. The queen was right on target, but unfortunately political leaders are not programmed to listen to the poor.

A few days later, at a seminar sponsored by the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, community organizers from Asia and Latin America spelled out how to compel leaders to listen. To be heard, poor people must be organized and engage in the political life of the country. Without such power, poor countries like the Philippines will make little progress overall and may even end up under populist demagogues, such as Venezuela's Hugo Chavez.

One after another the organizers explained how they had taken the first steps toward political power. Four young women from East Timor said they have two priorities: to help women operate vegetable gardens (1,000-2,000 sq m per woman) and to help them win local elections to gain political power. They have helped several women into office at the village level. In Central Java, the Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Peasants ran candidates in the last election in 10 rural districts where they work. They won in seven. Now they train the winners in the basics of governing. In the Madras area of India, the Immaculate Conception Sisters helped farmers win many elections. In the Philippines, the same movement of poor people into political office was seen during the last barangay election. From Camarin, Caloocan, to Paco Estero, the railroad tracks of Sampaloc, and Navotas and all the way to Infanta, Quezon, and General Santos City, poor people backed by people's organizations won political office and greater control over their community situations.

If the poor run their own candidates for office successfully, they gain immediate resources for their work, and they can negotiate with candidates higher up on the political ladder who may not be poor but who need the votes of the poor. In exchange for their votes, the poor can demand that they be treated as a regular political constituency, for whom the politicians must work just as they do for businessmen, landowners and other well-off sectors. If the poor have enough local support, they themselves can run for higher office. Today the barangay, tomorrow city hall.

Certain necessary steps which should be taken by the poor people's groups before entering local politics were also described at the CCODP meeting. First, they must organize, preferably around apolitical issues, such as land, basic services, coops, etc. These are (hopefully) easier issues in which the groups can build their strengths. All members, but especially the leaders, must be trained to be accountable to one another. The people must respect their leaders and exercise group discipline, but they should also be critical of leadership. The farmers group in General Santos City mentioned above broke with the party-list group they had supported in previous elections because the party-list group did not help them with their concrete issues. All leadership, just as the Church itself, must be continually reformed.

Secondly, women especially should be trained and groomed for office, since they are proving throughout Asia to be the most conscientious leaders, especially in urban areas.

Third, leaders must be trained to study the root causes of the problems they face, the ways and motivation of the powerful and what people are doing in other places about similar problems. A study of the rise and current problems of Hugo Chavez might be useful.

Finally, it is necessary to strengthen people's group by increasing the incomes of members. In East Timor it was vegetable gardens. Near Davao, the way is to grow cassava which brings a good price if the farmers are also helped to know the market in all its vagaries.

Throughout Asia, people's groups are growing, which should be seen as a very hopeful sign of development. If they don't multiply, the poor will remain as they are now at election time, a mass of onlookers who have no say over who is nominated or what the platform is, and who are easily manipulated with airy promises, a few handouts and an engaging personality.

If the people's initiative don't grow in the Philippines, the country's poor who make up 50 to 60 percent of the population (the urban poor alone constitute 25 percent of the electorate), they will remain vulnerable to a populist demagogue, a person with former President Joseph Estrada's appeal, but with more political cunning and more ruthless ambition. The coming to power of such a person will probably lead to the end of democracy.

Raul Isaias Baduel, former defense chief of Venezuela and a long-time friend and fellow officer of Chavez, explained in The New York Times (Dec. 1, 2007) that his country's problems came about because the elite never listened to the poor: "The elite never understood—and still don't understand—the need to include, in every sense, the millions who have been kept at the margins of the decision-making process because of their poverty. President Chavez led the poor to believe that they were finally being included in a governmental model that listened to them and would reduce poverty and inequality."

He said Chavez is now also forgetting to listen to the ordinary people.

Denis Murphy works with the Urban Poor Associates. His e-mail address is upa@pldtdsl.net

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Keep an eye on your daughters

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

I THOUGHT THE COUNTRY HAD AT LEAST three more years before having to contend with Romeo Jalosjos on our streets. I'd even joked that parents of 10-year-old girls had better keep them under lock and key three years from now, because the congressman-rapist liked 'em young.

Well, parents better keep an eye on their prepubescent girls right now, because Jalosjos will soon be walking out of the Bilibid compound a free man, even if his long walk to freedom has been delayed a while.

But make no mistake about it. Even if Malacañang supposedly paid attention to "public clamor" and ordered authorities to re-compute the time Jalosjos has left to serve, Jalosjos will be released sooner rather than later. President Macapagal-Arroyo, who commuted his double life sentence in the first place, and officials of the Bureau of Corrections, who can't seem to do enough to pleasure the former congressman, are merely biding their time. All they're waiting for is a softening of public opinion toward the soon-to-be-ex-convict, or temporary amnesia on the part of the people, and before we know it, probably under the cover of darkness as in the case of Lance Corporal Smith of the Subic rape case fame, and Jalosjos will have flown the coop. Maybe even after a tennis game or two in the tennis court he had built in Bilibid.

The Bilibid chaplain argues that in the years he has spent in Muntinlupa, Jalosjos has been a "model" prisoner and paid for his crime against a child by good behavior and good works—mainly by financing projects for the prisoners and paying for the construction of new facilities.

But he has hardly shown any remorse, and before his trial and sentencing had even attempted to flee the country, which for other suspects is considered an "admission of guilt." Department of Justice officials re-computing his time served should also take into consideration the weeks and months he has spent in a hospital on one health pretext or another. How much time has Jalosjos truly spent behind bars?

* * *

THE MAGNANIMITY toward Jalosjos is indicative, I think, of the attitude of many in government and in the justice system toward rape. Many judges, for instance, look on rape survivors as somehow complicit in their violation. As in the case of Karen Vertido, who has brought her ordeal not just with her rapist but with the court system all the way to the Cedaw committee in New York, judges demand that women who bring charges of rape prove that they lived a blameless life before the crime, protested the violation clearly and loudly, and physically struggled to the point of risking their lives if their stories are to be believed.

In Jalosjos' case, his victim was a child at the time he abused her, even demanding, as the girl recalled, that she lift her skirt and prove to him that she had not yet had a period. Even so, some commentators crassly suggested that she could not have been raped because she was being paid for her services. As if paying for sex with a child excuses or absolves one of the crime. In fact, paying a child for sex makes the offense doubly offensive.

There is a view that rape is not "really" a crime, because no one died, and survivors can and do move on. But I challenge everyone, every male, who holds this opinion that if he truly believes this, he must then offer up his girlfriend, wife, mother or daughter to rapists because, after all, "no crime is being committed."

* * *

THERE is one other aspect to this issue. Lawyer Katrina Legarda, who with her colleague June Ambrosio acted as private prosecutor and succeeded against all odds in sending Jalosjos to jail, points out that in this country, the age of consent to sex is still 14 years old.

This is why the age of Jalosjos' accuser was such a contentious issue, because if it was proven that she was 14 or older during her rape, then the issue of "consent" could then be entered into the proceedings. Katrina appeals to all legislators to amend the penal code and raise the age of consent, perhaps to 18, which is the threshold of adulthood.

But even if she were 18, what kind of "equity of power" would an 18-year-old have against a powerful and wealthy congressman? A congressman, moreover, who manages to wiggle his way out of a double life sentence and who now threatens to sue the government because his release is being delayed.

And another point: If 14 is the age of consent for sex, shouldn't girls be given information and education on sexual responsibility and self-defense before this age? How can our so-called "moral betters" be adamantly against sex education and yet accept the sexual exploitation of 14-year-olds? Maybe Jalosjos can provide the uncomfortable answers.

* * *

I MUST have been still hung-over when I wrote yesterday's column. Or maybe it was the weather, as Jingjing Romero of Stratos Communications, who handles Seair's PR, so kindly put it. But there were errors in that column and here's my attempt at rectifying them.

The co-founder of Seair we had lunch with in Zuzuni (which he also co-owns) is Nick Gitsis, and the project consultant of One MGM resort, who played our most gracious host, is Manolito "Lito" Cruz. Ramoncito "Chito" Cruz is his brother and they are co-publishers of Muse Magazine. One MGM's COO and general manager is Rey Fuentes.

Lito Cruz says Matt Monro Jr. "loved" the column, and that just fills my heart with joy! "Long Tall Howard" Medina, who handles artists brought in by Steve O'Neill Productions, which pioneered the importation of revival acts to this country, says MMJ is "the real thing." He was born after his father legally changed his name to Matt Monro, so contrary to what we thought, he does go by his real name!

Foundation of a long relationship

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

ALMOST EVERYONE CONDEMNS THE MEMORIZATION of data, which was the backbone of traditional history teaching. Unless you join game shows and do crossword puzzles for a living, there is little practical use for the mass of dates, names, places and past events that clog the brain. In my classes, historical data do not have to be memorized, but students must know where to find them when needed and, most importantly, find connections between stray pieces of data to make a point, or find insight in hindsight.

When I look back on my history teachers, three come to mind as formative models: One high school teacher taught me to see how events came together and made me ask and answer why things happened the way they did. A college teacher was such a wonderful story teller she made me enjoy the past simply for what it was. Last but not least, there was an eccentric American Jesuit whose passion for history was the whole point of the class whether you got infected or not.

Despite her reputation as a "terror" teacher to be avoided at all cost, I was crazy enough to enroll under Helen Tubangui for two consecutive Philippine History courses. Although I hated her exams, which required memorization of a mass of useless information, the sheer exercise of memory must have been worth the effort. It was the way she lectured that got me hooked, the grand sweep of history delivered authoritatively and spiced with humor all delivered in a deadpan manner. Miss Tubangui never laughed in class and merely gave a hint of smile, like Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa—a smirk actually, that everyone believed she developed in her other life as a national bridge player. The jocks who understood cars marveled that despite her age she drove herself to school in a striking lemon green, two-door sports car with mag wheels.

Danton Remoto remembers one question from his final exam: "What was the name of Jose Rizal's pet dog?" He also remembers the answer he gave—"Usman"—although for most people, it would be something generic like "Spot" or iconic like Pepe en Pilar's playful watchdog "Bantay." However, Rizal's writings reveal that the pet dog was "Alipato."

The question I remember from my final exam was: "What was it that Rizal didn't like about the women of Dapitan?" Answer: They didn't wear stockings.

These cannot be considered life changing at all, but for all those who cared to listen, we never looked at Rizal the same way again.

One of the requirements to pass Miss Tubangui's course was to go to the library and do research in two multi-volume primary sources on Philippine history. In the course that covered the American period, we had to plow through the Reports of the Philippine Commission and the Annual Reports of the US Governors-General. For the Spanish colonial period, we were made to go through the 55-volume compilation of documents entitled "The Philippine Islands 1493-1898: Explorations by Early Navigators, Descriptions of the Islands and their Peoples, their History and Records of the Catholic Missions, as related in Contemporaneous Books and Manuscripts, showing the Political, Economic, Commercial and Religious Conditions of those Islands from their Earliest Relations with European Nations to the Close of the 19th Century." I often attempt to read out this kilometric title in one breath, watching my students cringe as I turn blue and risk near collapse at the lectern. With such a title, the compiled documents, all translated from the original Spanish, is better known as "BR" or simply "Blair and Robertson," from the duo that compiled, edited and annotated everything: Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson. I don't know if Miss Blair visited the archipelago, but she worked patiently from a cubby hole in the Wisconsin Historical Society, while Robertson later served as director of the National Library in Manila.

We were instructed to go over the two-volume index of Blair and Robertson to scan the entries under the letter that corresponded with the first letter of our surnames in search of a topic for a short research paper. I don't remember what I wrote for that paper, but I remember being disappointed when "O" did not yield anything on: Orgy, Ocampo, or Orangutan. Everything under my research field was boring: Ocean, Omen, and Orani, Bataan. Yet that first encounter with Blair and Robertson was the foundation of a long and fruitful relationship. I may not have read the whole series cover to cover twice like O.D. Corpuz, but early in my career at writing Philippine history for a general audience, Carmen Guerrero Nakpil pointed this out as an inexhaustible source for a lifetime of columns.

Following Miss Tubangui's example, every semester my students are introduced to Blair and Robertson and they cough up papers on a wide range of topics like: Expulsion of the Jesuits, Mestizos, Datu Ubal, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, Concubinage and Concubines, Slavery, Friars, Galleons and Revenue. At the outset, everything is an academic exercise in finding relevance or interest in seemingly useless information, but I think the research and the handling of the data provide a memorable experience that will hopefully make students look back with fondness on their history class and history teacher.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Three rivers

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING THE EFFORTS TO "SAVE" THE Pasig River, with occasional reports that there's hope, i.e., the river has been brought back from near death, and while it remains in critical condition, we just might see it revived in a few years.

A lot will of course depend on Metro Manila's waste management system and convincing both industrial firms and households not to dump more poisons into the river. That might take time. People just haven't learned to appreciate how important the river is in terms of culture: it was the Pasig that allowed Tagalog culture to emerge and, together with it, Metro Manila. In fact, technically, we could speak of a Pasig that gave rise to Mega Manila, encompassing Metro Manila and parts of Central and Southern Luzon, since the Pasig River is connected to the Laguna de Bay.

In the last year, I took two river cruises—one for Singapore and the other for the Chao Phrya in Thailand—that alerted me to how our neighbors appreciate their rivers, and what they've been doing to share this with foreigners.

I also know many Filipinos are also using the Christmas break for travel, and they can consider this a travel tip as well. If you have the chance, try out these river cruises as an alternative way of sight-seeing.

Singapore

Singapore's Changi Airport is great even with long stopovers, and for nerds like myself, it's mainly because it has good bookstores where I can browse for an hour or two. Besides the shops though, Changi offers a great deal: If your stop-over is longer than five hours, you can sign up for a free cruise down Singapore River.

Singapore-style, everything is arranged quite efficiently. Even as you queue to sign up, airport staff will check with you about your flights to make sure you have enough time. They bus you into the city, load you into river boats for a tour of about half an hour, and then you get back to the airport—all in two hours. The bus trip itself is a guided tour, with grandmotherly women herding the passengers; they're constantly counting to make sure no one escapes into the city and goes TNT (*tago-nang-tago*).

Many people sign up for the tours; our batch had two busloads, mostly Indian *balikbayans* (they're called NRIs or non-resident Indians). The trip into the city has the guide explaining Singapore's history, its landmarks, even its housing projects. The river cruise has a taped American voice explaining Singapore's history again but with a focus on how the river helped to make Singapore what it is today. I hadn't realized how important this river was for the city, from early settlements of Chinese migrants, through the colonial period and to the present. The river's shape is considered by the Chinese to be auspicious in terms of *feng shui*, thus many large Singaporean and multinational firms have their offices around the river.

The river banks have also gone through a revival in terms of old Chinese shophouses. These were built many decades ago, their ground floors used as shops while the families lived above on the second and third floors. The shophouses deteriorated over the years, until city planners saw the potential of renovating the buildings. Today, they command high prices as Singapore's new affluent classes buy the buildings for residences. The ones by the riverfront are now high-end coffee shops and resto-bars.

As we passed by the shophouses, I thought of the areas around Escolta and Chinatown. All that's needed are enterprising real estate and business developers to recharge the place, but this depends too on the state of the Pasig River. For as long as it remains polluted, with a foul stench, it will be difficult to attract investors.

The Singapore river cruise is free, intended to tempt you to visit Singapore again, and not just for a stop-over. The airport offer is a real bargain because if you do visit Singapore as a regular tourist, and want to take the cruise, you have to pay about US$10. And don't think it's all serious history stuff: the boat ride can be relaxing, just take in the sights. Look especially for life-like bronze sculptures of children playing by the river.

Chao Phrya

I've taken boats along the Chao Phrya several times, from a commercial "taxi" type barge, which goes from one station to another, to grand dinner evening cruises. These cruises are enjoyable but only take you down the main river.

Recently, I accidentally discovered a different cruise that takes you to the river's "alleyways." I had just visited Wat Po (the temple with the reclining Buddha) and wanted to take the river "taxi" but ended up in one of the river stations that was offering what they call "canal cruises," a route that goes deep into the riverside communities, past landmarks like the Royal Barges Museum and Wat Arun or Temple of the Dawn.

The boats look like an Asian gondola, but don't imagine this to be anything like Venice. The Chao Phrya is polluted, although not half as badly as the Pasig. The boat ride takes you past some very poor areas, which can be depressing, but by and large, the trip allows you glimpses into the lives of middle-class Thais. Taking the trip late afternoon proved to be an advantage because I got to see people returning home and unwinding. We went beneath several bridges, and it was heartwarming to see parents returning home with their children. At one point, I saw a father carrying his bike on one hand, while using his other hand to hold his daughter, as they walked through the bridge.

I hadn't realized there was so much life around the river. At one point, I thought I was in Malabon, with flooded streets. There were no paved streets at all. Then I realized all the houses had little wharfs built into the river. There were also concrete embankments built to connect the houses, allowing pedestrian passage. These were not flooded streets; residents had chosen to live, literally, on the river. To move around, they can take the boats plying the river.

So, going down the river, you get to see families cooking, eating, watching television. Sometimes, we'd pass someone just sitting by the river bank, literally watching the world go by.

The boat didn't just pass homes. There were quite a few restaurants, including some up-market ones which were using their riverbank location as a come-on. There were several temples, too, including one with signs saying, "Feed the fish for good luck." There were other buildings that looked like warehouses, reminding me again of Manila's Chinatown bodegas.

The Chao Phrya alleyways are not gentrified like Singapore River's. These are average Thais who depend on the river for their livelihood. It could well be Pasig, too, if we worked on it.

The cost? You pay for the entire boat, whether you're all alone, a cozy pair, or a rowdy group of eight people. I was feeling proud of myself getting the boat for 1,300 baht, until a Thai friend told me I should have gone down to 800 baht (about P900).

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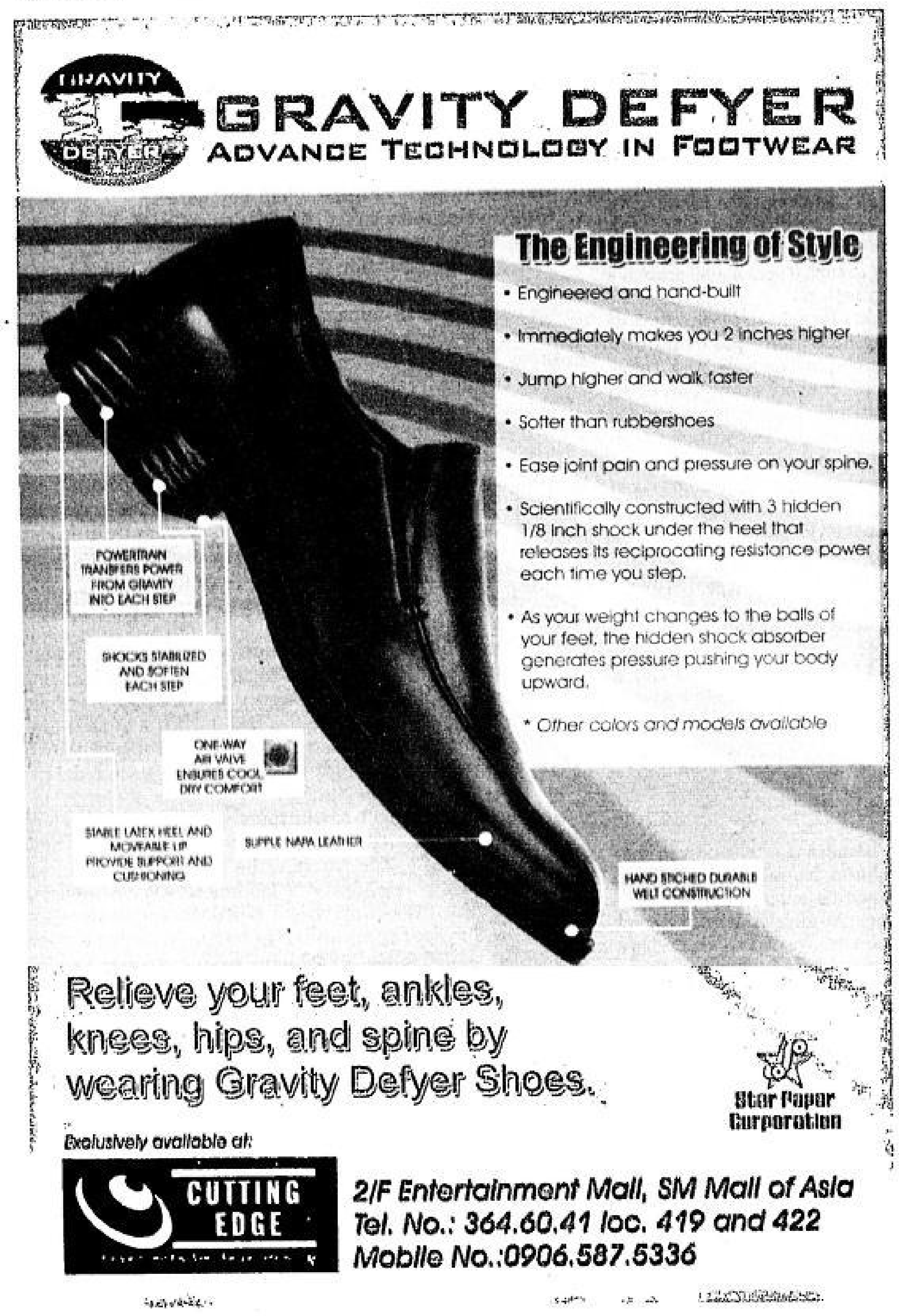
Insensitive representatives

MANY FILIPINOS CAN'T AFFORD TO EAT AT least three full meals a day. Yet, the government didn't mind spending millions of pesos for the unnecessarily large entourage that traveled with President Macapagal-Arroyo to Europe, including around 30 members of the House of Representatives.

Whether or not the funds came from the public coffers is not the question. The "people's representatives" should have considered that millions of Filipinos are mired deep in the bowels of poverty. Five thousand dollars for the fare of one person?

The millions of pesos spent for the junketeers could have been used to feed hundreds of street children or to buy textbooks for public school children. This is really a rotten government.

—CLARISSE SAN FELIPE,
sanfelipe_essiralc@yahoo.com.ph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Public auction held without prior notice

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE ACQUISITION by the Quezon City government (through a public auction) of the UP Sikatuna BLISS housing projects phases I and II in Diliman. The public auction, conducted last Sept. 27 by the Quezon City treasurer's office to collect some P17 million in real estate taxes from 1985 to 2007, came as a big surprise to the more than 2,500 residents of the two UP Sikatuna BLISS projects.

The housing projects were developed and constructed by the then BLISS Development Corp. under the Ministry of Human Settlements through a usufruct agreement with the University of the Philippines. The agreement allowed the residents to pay the rent in 25 years and to stay there for another 25 years.

The Quezon City treasurer's office did not bother to list down the names and addresses of the residents they were collecting taxes from. Neither did it send them prior notices specifying the taxes due or the pertinent tax declarations (the residents have not acquired—and they will never acquire—titles to the units awarded them) as bases for the collection of taxes. The owner of the lot is UP, while that of the buildings is the national government represented by the National Home Mortgage and Finance Corp. (NHMFC) and the Home Guaranty Corp. (HGC).

It may help the Quezon City treasurer's office to know that after the BLISS Development Corp. and the Ministry of Human Settlements were abolished upon the assumption of the Aquino administration, no other government office was immediately designated to take over their functions. It was only after several years that the NHMFC was designated as the collection agency for phase I and the HGC for phase II.

Since the Quezon City government has acquired ownership of the two UP Sikatuna BLISS projects through the Sept. 27 public auction, would the residents now stop paying rent to the NHMFC and the HGC and instead start paying both rent and real estate taxes to the treasurer's office? Or, would the residents now be forced to join the ranks of informal settlers?

—ORLY PALACPAC,
orly1028 @ yahoo.com

Alston also critical of non-state actors

SEN. JUAN PONCE ENRILE DEnounced the report of United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston as a mere "clerical job." Enrile added that Alston should have just shut up. (INQUIRER, 11/29/07)

For us, it is the fake ambush victim, now senator, who should shut up. The Alston report on human rights violations in the Philippines was quite objective. It castigated not only state institutions (Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police, Inter-Agency Legal Action Group) but also non-state actors (Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army, vigilante groups in Davao City, landowners and their goons) as responsible for arbitrary executions in the country.

As an agrarian reform advocate, we find particularly relevant in the Alston report that section on the killing of peasants in agrarian reform disputes. Many peasants asserting their right to land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program have been killed by goons of landowners and by alleged members of the NPA, who are both opposed to the implementation of the program.

Alston also correctly pointed out that local government officials "are often more interested in protecting the holdings of local elites" and police protection for peasants "has often been strikingly inadequate."

—RAFFY REY HIPOLITO,
advocacy officer,
Partnership for Agrarian Reform,
& Rural Development Services
(PARRDS), 85 K-10th St.,
Kamias, Quezon City

Clergy scored for lack of activism

WE ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED with the lack of activism of Church leaders in relation to the moral bankruptcy—corruption, cheating and lying—of government officials. Priests do not remind the faithful that it is their duty to fight corruption and to demand good governance. The priests do not read in churches or distribute the pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, demanding truth and good governance.

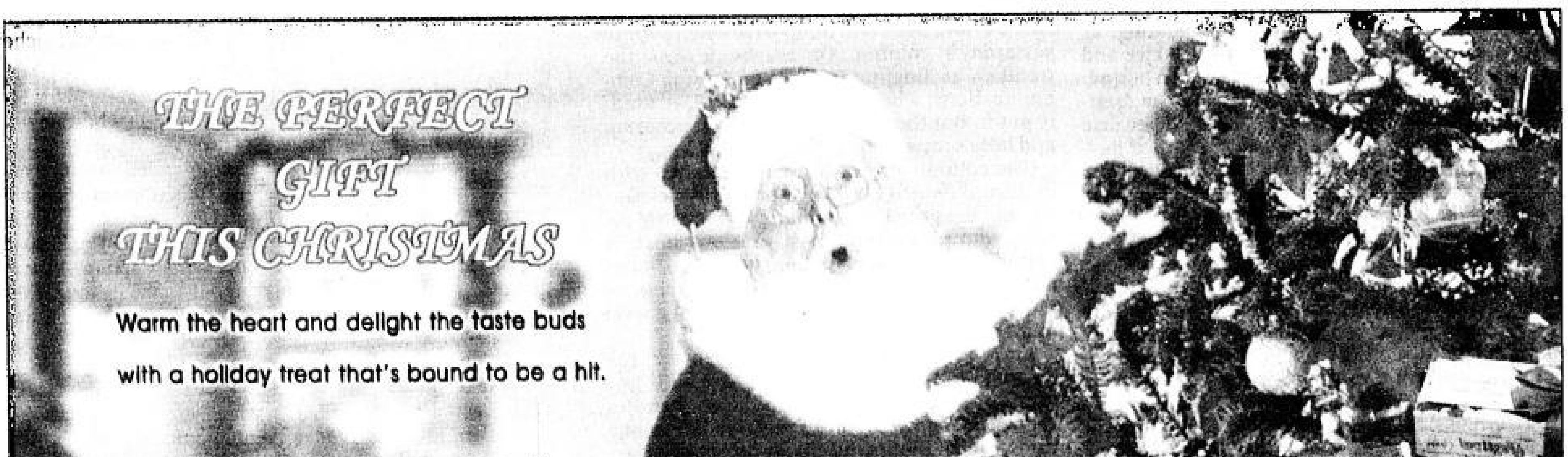
One of the greatest stumbling blocks to having an intelligent and free electorate (to ensure the election of good leaders) is the widespread poverty in our country. People in want can be easily bought and dictated upon by corrupt politicians. Poverty prevents them from spontaneously mobilizing themselves to show their indignation since they lack the necessary logistics. Poverty, therefore, has to be drastically reduced so that our recurring leadership problems will be resolved. Some say we have countless hectares of farmlands but they forget that there are not enough funds to irrigate and develop them because of the widespread and large-scale corruption in our government. We are left, therefore, to slowing down our population growth as a practical approach to combat poverty.

But the priests have not been brave enough to use the pulpit and other means at their disposal to instill in church members, especially those in the provinces, the need to be rational and to properly plan the family. They should tell the faithful that bringing into this world children that they cannot support and who could end up as prostitutes in Malaysia or Singapore or as exploited domestic helpers in other countries is wrong and, possibly, even sinful. The priests can limit themselves to preaching natural family planning, but the point is: they should help solve the problem.

In Pampanga, Gov. Ed Panlilio, in the first five months of his term, collected more "lahar fees" than his two predecessors. The funds will be distributed to the province, municipalities and barangays for their projects. Good for the entire province. But all the mayors and provincial board members have ganged up on him to remove from the provincial government the authority to collect these fees. They are not happy that the province's resources have multiplied, that the hundreds of millions of lost income in the past are now being collected. And the only logical reason for this is, in the past, Pampanga's officials—from the governor down to provincial board members and to the mayors—feasted on the lahar fees by themselves to the exclusion of their constituents. Now their pockets are empty and they are crying for blood.

It appears that many priests are interested more in "lacing" their churches with gold, which does not benefit the faithful. This is a throwback to the past. They should take note that today, the luxurious European churches of the past serve more as tourist sites than as houses of prayer and worship.

—FRANCISCO ALCUAZ,
pacoalcu@zpdee.net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Congress urged to pass Cheaper Medicines Bill

WILL THE 14TH CONGRESS BE ABLE TO pass the Cheaper Medicines Bill?

In 2005, I urged our lawmakers, for the sake of our country and our people, to give the bill priority and pass it before the 13th Congress shall have adjourned. A representative assured me that the bill would be passed if there was a quorum. Unfortunately, the majority of our representatives did not attend the final sessions of the 13th Congress. Had the bill been passed, it would have been one of the few legacies of the 13th Congress.

Last Sunday, I chanced upon the same representative. I shared with him my concerns about a similar bill, specifically, the likelihood of the 14th Congress failing to pass it as promised by Speaker Jose de Venecia several days ago.

Once again, I am urging Congress to finally pass the new and revised version of the bill (now House Bill 0001), the first bill to be filed on the first day of the 14th Congress.

—JERRY A. QUIBILAN,
Crusaders for Peace,
Prosperity, Unity and Love,
jerryaquibilan@yahoo.com

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Chopper rented by US Army shot at

By Julie Alipala *Inquirer Mindanao* **and Nikko Dizon** *in Manila*

ONE PERSON WAS WOUNDED WHEN A HELIcopter supplying US military advisers in Mindanao was fired on, the US Embassy said yesterday.

The Philippine military confirmed Monday's attack and said the aircraft was chartered by a US defense contractor.

"Early on Dec. 17, a civilian helicopter conducting a routine support and logistics flight with the Joint Special Operations Task Force was hit by small-arms fire over Basilan Island," US Embassy press attaché Karen Schinnerer said.

"One individual aboard suffered minor injuries from flying debris. All personnel are safe and accounted for," she added. "The helicopter landed at the airfield in Zamboanga without difficulty."

The Bell helicopter encountered "hostile ground fire" from unidentified men while flying over the town of Tipo-Tipo, said Filipino Marine Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban.

Small groups of US military advisers are providing training and intelligence data to Filipino troops hunting a number of Islamic militant groups in Basilan and the nearby island of Jolo.

Sabban said the helicopter was chartered by US defense contractor Dyncorp and was on its way back to Zamboanga City from Jolo, where it delivered supplies to US forces there.

Filipino troops have been dispatched to the area to investigate, the general said.

"That area is known for the presence of the Abu Sayyaf and MILF," Sabban said, referring to the separatist Muslim guerrilla group Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which is holding peace talks with the Philippine government.

"Aircraft passing the area are usually fired on," he added.

Maj. Gen. Nelson Allaga said there were no US troops in the helicopter.

US troops are staying at AFP's Camp Bautista in Sulu with the Philippine Army's 104th Infantry Brigade.

Sabban said it was normal for helicopters, like those of the AFP, to be shot at in Basilan.

"They even shoot at the moon," he said.

US Navy Lt. Commander Melissa Schuermann, public affairs officer of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTFP), which is based in Zamboanga City, confirmed the incident.

The mayor of the town of Unkaya Pukan, where the helicopter was to deliver supplies, said US personnel were aboard the helicopter.

Mayor Joel Maturan said the helicopter, being flown by US pilots, was trying to land in his town around 7 a.m.

He said the helicopter was bringing in American military officers for a meeting with town engineer Abdulmajid Pattah in connection with road projects in the town.

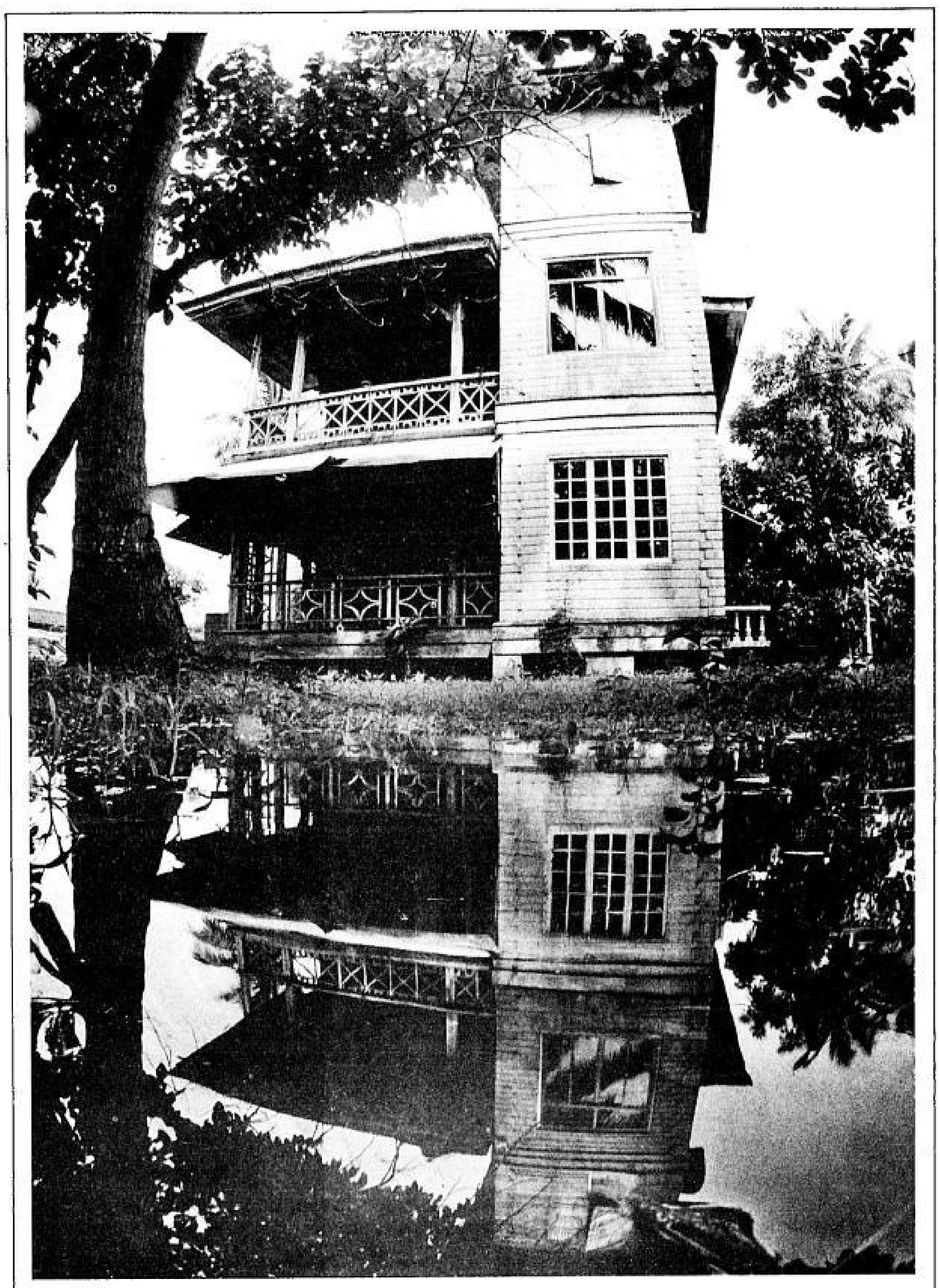
"We were worried because we were supposed to meet the American military officers through our engineer but we heard shots and we saw the low-flying helicopter trying to inch up and abandon the landing," Maturan said.

Maturan said in a report later submitted by militiamen, it was learned that the armed men positioned themselves "somewhere between the village of Bohe Suyak under Unkaya Pukan and Silangkom village in Tipo-Tipo Central."

"They sprayed bullets on the helicopter that was on the maneuvering stage for a final touch down around 7 a.m.," he said.

Maturan said the incident also prompted the Americans to abandon the meeting and the signing of a memorandum of agreement for the projects.

Schuermann denied the reports, saying nobody was harmed. *With a report from AFP*



TEST OF TIME
A house in Pila, Laguna is kept in its almost original state in a town that treasures its heritage structures.
EDWIN BACASMAS

Mayor won't yield son to lawmen enforcing custody ruling

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation could not locate Pulupandan Mayor Magdaleno Peña and his three-year-old son in Negros Occidental as of Tuesday.

NBI Bacolod chief Mamerto Cortez said they tried to implement an order of the Supreme Court directing their agency to turn over custody of the three-year-old boy to his mother, actress and TV host Marie Roxanne "Plinky" Recto. Recto and Peña have been locked in a long legal battle over custody of their son.

However, Cortez said Peña was not in his house in Barangay Ubay, Pulupandan when NBI Bacolod Special Investigator Geovel Aperio went there Tuesday.

Peña, when reached for comment on Tuesday through his cellular phone, said he was traveling in the south and that his son was with him.

However, he would not say if he was in Negros, the Philippines or out of the country.

Peña said that while he respects the SC decision, a Court of Appeals decision that the SC seeks to enforce should have been stayed until it was final and executory.

The policy of the SC has been for both parents to have shared custody in the upbringing of their child, Peña said.

Peña said he would bring the child to the Supreme Court in time.

In its decision, the Supreme Court said turning over the child to Recto was enforcement in part of the CA decisions on Sept. 15, 2006 and Jan. 24, 2007.

The CA rulings said the boy is below seven years old and is an illegitimate child.

Under Article 176 of the Family Code, illegitimate children should be under the sole parental custody of their mother, the SC said.

"She has the right to keep him in her company. She cannot be deprived of that right, and she may not even renounce or transfer it except in cases authorized by the law," the High Court ruled.

Bersamin slay recalled a year after in Abra

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

PEÑARRUBIA, ABRA—THE mastermind of the murder of Rep. Luis "Chito" Bersamin Jr., whose first death anniversary was observed on Sunday, Dec. 16 in simple rites in the province, will be revealed this week, according to the slain lawmaker's eldest daughter.

"We will finally learn the mastermind in the killing of my father. It's not as simple as we first thought; I believe it was a conspiracy," said Charri Bersamin.

She said the three "John Does" included in the charge sheet might finally be identified and their identification would help establish conspiracy in the murder of her father.

Confessions

Charri said the findings were based on police evidence and the confessions of former La Paz Vice Mayor Freddie Dupo and his cousin, Sonny Taculao, who were arrested in October in their hideout in Rizal.

Dupo and Taculao, who are detained in the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame, are the main suspects in the killing of Representative Bersamin and his bodyguard, SPO1 Adelfo Ortega, last year in front of Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City. Representative Bersamin was attacked after he attended the wedding of a niece.

Another suspect in the Bersamin slaying, Salvador Barbosa, died of leptospirosis in Manila in September, Charri said.

Former soldier Rufino Panday surfaced a few days after the killing and confessed his role as lookout and supplier of the getaway vehicles. He implicated Dupo, Taculao and former Gov. Vicente Valera in the murder.

Retraction

Panday has since retracted his confession but he is still among those charged in Bersamin's murder.

Valera has denied participation in the murder. He ran for representative of Abra in the May 14 elections this year but lost to Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna in the race.

Bersamin said she was the one tasked by the family with following up the case of her father.

She said with this task, she had to give up her grocery business in the capital town of Bangued and had to maintain only a small business in Metro Manila.

She said she would not allow any compromise and work to give her father justice.

"*Hindi ko ipagpapalit ang kaso ng Tatay ko* (I won't trade my father's case for anything)," she said.

Charri said she still receives death threats through text messages and has been tailed by people in unmarked vehicles but she has learned to live with it.

Masses commemorating the death anniversary of Bersamin were offered in select churches in Abra last Sunday. After Mass, family members gathered for lunch at the family's house in Bangued.

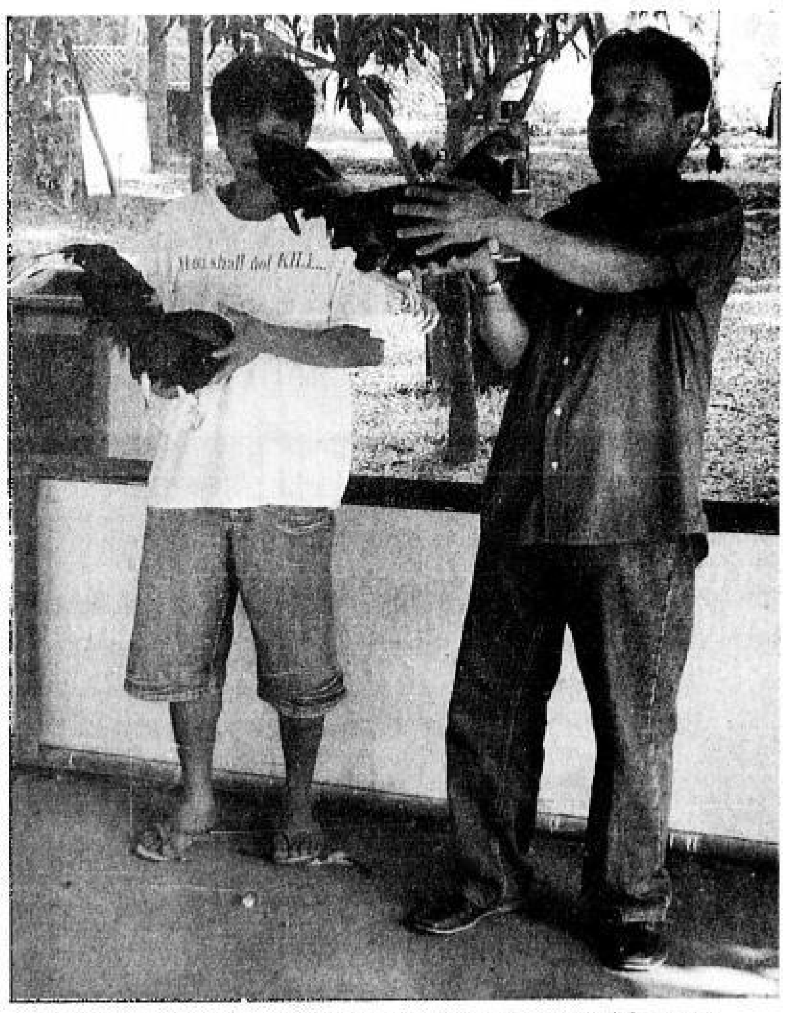
If her dreams were any indication, Charri said her father is finally relieved over the progress of the case.

"During the first months [of his death], I would dream of him and I need to be hugged by him for reassurance. Now, whenever I dream of him, he was distant but smiling," she said.

Gov. Eustaquio "Kit" Bersamin, younger brother of the slain lawmaker and an eyewitness to the killing, said he distanced himself from the case to show impartiality.

"I can't be compared to him. *Malayo ang ginawa niya* (My brother had done many things)," he said.

"He was in politics for 25 years. *Hindi ko kayang tapatan. Pero ibubuhos ko lahat ang kaya ko* (I cannot match his accomplishments but I will try my best)," the governor said.


You shall not KILL...

ABRA GOV. Eustaquio "Takit" Bersamin carries one of the stags which he jointly bred with his slain brother Abra Rep. Luis "Chito" Bersamin. The Bersamin brothers are known cock breeders.
LEONCIO BALBIN JR.

Native huts pushed as alternative classrooms

By Delmar Carino
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—REalizing the role of indigenous approaches to learning, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the province has required all public schools to build native huts in their campuses as alternative learning sites.

Dr. Mary Namuhe, Benguet schools division superintendent, named as "School Adivay Parks" the learning areas where the huts were built and encouraged parents and teachers to initiate the project.

The schools launched the project in November, during the Adivay celebration, the province's annual cultural gathering, which also began the yearlong search for the best parks.

The "School Adivay Parks" aim to provide an alternate learning venue for students where they could be provided with a friendlier and more relaxed learning environment, Namuhe, said.

"It would display and exhibit the least learned competencies in the previous lessons and in all subject areas [so we can] improve on them," she said.

For slow learners

Pureza Tarnate, Benguet Special Educational Center teacher, said the park is "very effective" in helping her handicapped students, whom she said are "slow learners."

The school has 219 students and Tarnate, 62, handles the 52 slow learners.

"The maps, pictures and drawings displayed in the huts aroused their interest to learn more. They mentioned them during the regular class hours," she said.

Namuhe said the native huts could boost learning competencies since each of the subject areas would have their respective huts within the park—English, Math, Science, Filipino and the component areas of Makabayan.

The park, Namuhe said, would be used as alternate classrooms where classroom principles and themes would be applied and illustrated in the huts in the form of instruments or visual aids that the students could examine during their free time.

Benchmark

"Since the huts are made of indigenous materials, learning would become less formal and routine-like," Namuhe said.

The province has 354 elementary schools with 48,816 students and 51 secondary schools with 18,334 students. There are 2,406 teachers in both levels.

Namuhe said the project was conceptualized as a benchmark for DepEd's program for good teaching and learning practices under the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Plan (Sedip).

She said the School Adivay Parks are similar to the learning parks of Zamboanga del Sur public schools, which were presented during the Sedip general assembly held in Iloilo City recently.

In the parks, the teachers will encourage the buddy system to develop collaborative learning among students.

Namuhe said the parks would be judged according to their effectiveness in increasing students' performances and the use of multiple sensory devices, tools and instruments that are unique, economical and appropriate aids for learning.

Inhibition of poll exec in Batangas case sought

THE LEGAL COUNSEL OF BATANGAS VICE Gov. Mark Leviste yesterday sought the disqualification or voluntary inhibition of newly appointed Commission on Elections Commissioner Moslemen T. Macarambon from the Comelec division hearing the petition of his rival, Edwin Ermita, son of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

In a motion to disqualify or inhibit Macarambon received by the Comelec last Dec. 11, the Leviste camp claimed that Macarambon, who is yet to be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments, will have to be extended another ad interim appointment by Malacañang, where Ermita's father is the Executive Secretary, whose office releases the presidential appointment.

In a statement quoting him, Leviste complained about the unseemly haste by which the Comelec First Division, headed by Acting Commissioner Resureccion Borra, has ordered the immediate revision of the election returns and ballots despite the fact that Ermita has not yet paid in full the revision fees of P4.8 million.

"The unseemly haste is made all the more glaring when placed against a similar protest filed by Salvador Carlos against Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian, which was filed much earlier, and where my lawyer, Attorney Quadra is likewise the counsel for Gatchalian," the Batangas vice governor said.

Leviste won in the last elections with a lead of more than 19,000 votes over Executive Secretary Ermita's son.

Leviste's proclamation was delayed until June 30 as a result of moves made by the Ermita camp.

In an earlier interview, Leviste said should he lose in the recount, he would consider appealing the case to the Supreme Court.

Official Comelec results showed that Leviste got 334,847 votes, followed by Ermita, 316,578; actor Christopher de Leon, 150,817; Praxedes Bustamante, 2,006; and Fortunata Magsombol, 665.

In July, Ermita filed another protest against Leviste accusing him of cheating, acts of terrorism and intimidation, and contested the results in 34 towns of Batangas province. The charges, however, were denied by Leviste.

In October, Quadra filed a motion to dismiss Ermita's petition, which the Comelec denied. A motion for reconsideration was later filed in the same month but the poll body rejected it. *Marlon Alexander Luistro, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Nur aide named security exec

COTABATO CITY—A TRUSTED LIEUTENANT of jailed Moro National Liberation Front founder Nur Misuari has been named deputy national security adviser.

Thambeyapha Jayari Manjoorsa, an ophthalmologist, will join the office of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales.

He was appointed last month.

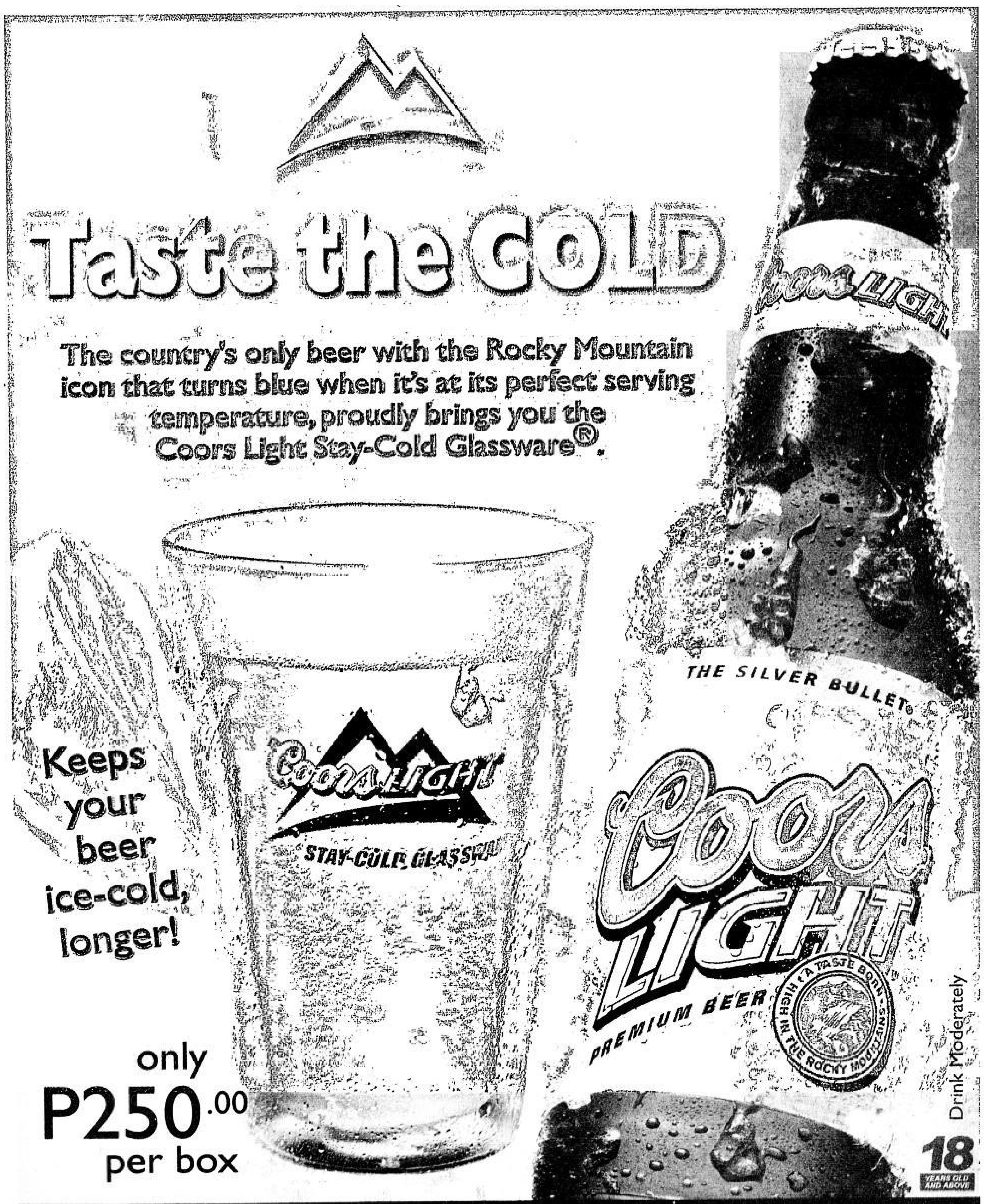
Manjoorsa, 64, was with Misuari when they organized the MNLF in the early 1970s. He served as the front's intelligence chief.

A graduate of the Centro Escolar University, Manjoorsa was among the 90 Moro activists that Misuari, then a professor at the University of Philippines recruited in 1971. They were trained in Malaysia and spearheaded the Moro secessionist uprising in 1973.

From 1997 to 2001, he served as agriculture secretary of Misuari when Misuari was governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Jesus Dureza, presidential adviser on the peace process, said Manjoorsa's appointment was an indication of the government's determination to pursue peace in Mindanao.

The MNLF has been complaining of lack of involvement of its qualified leaders in regional and national governance as part of its peace pact with the government. *Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*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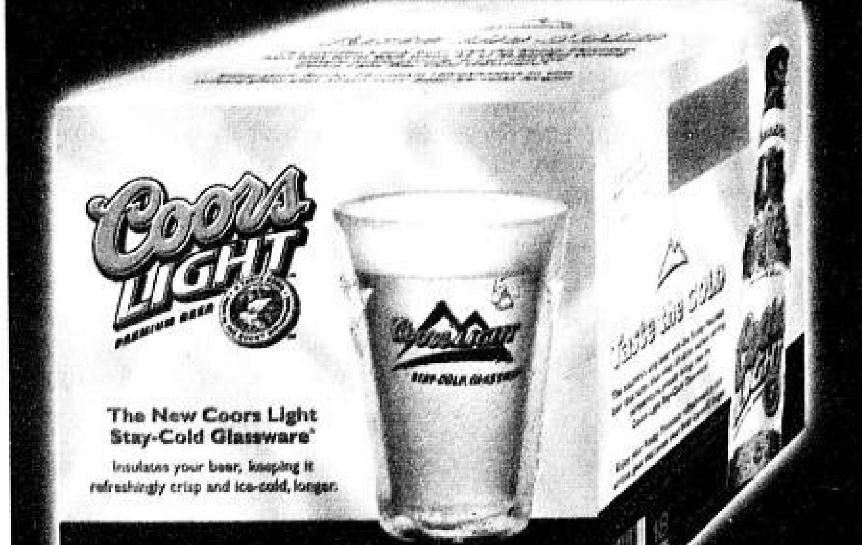
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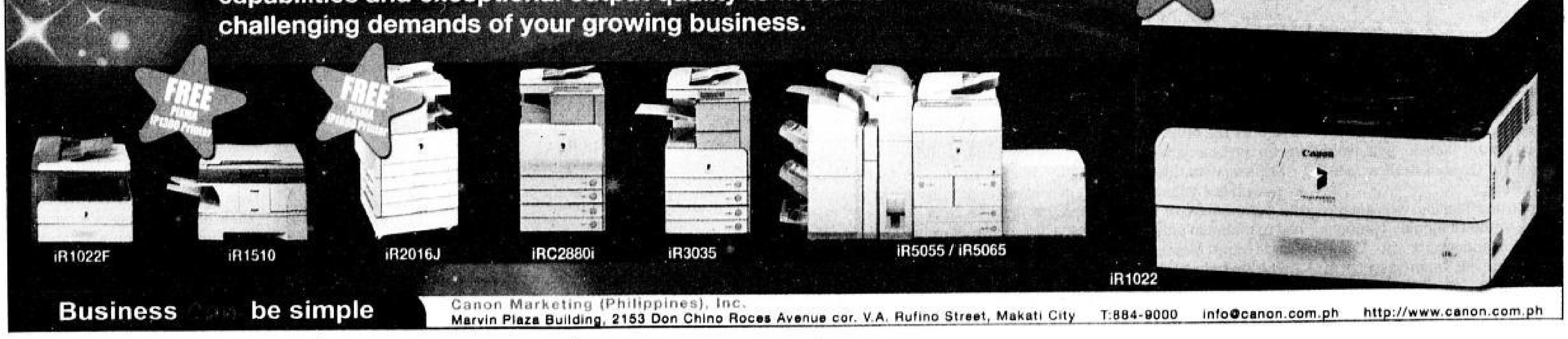
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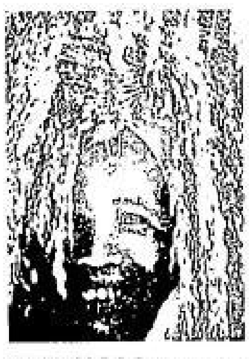
THE PICTURESQUE rice terraces of Mayoyao are among Ifugao's top attractions.

PHOTOS BY EV ESPIRITU

'Still an awesome landscape in Ifugao'

'Just looking at the rice terraces energizes and inspires you'



AN IFUGAO woman carries newly harvested *tinawon* rice stalks on her head.

By Maribelle Bimohya
Contributor

ALTHOUGH THE CENTURIES-old rice terraces of Ifugao have been included in the list of endangered World Heritage sites, these hallmarks of Ifugao industry, craftsmanship and indigenous knowledge, remain an awesome landscape.

This was the shared observation of about 70 international conservationists, architects and experts on traditional landscapes after they visited the rice terraces and interacted with villagers.

"Just looking at the terraces energizes and inspires you," said Marc de Caraffe, president of the International Council for Monuments and Sites' (Icomos) committee on vernacular architecture.

The experts joined the International Conference on Protecting Endangered Traditional Landscapes in Banaue town early this month. The meeting was organized by Icomos, an international organization of architects, urban planners, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians and other professionals involved in heritage conservation.

Icomos is the only nongovernment organization accredited to advise the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (Unesco) world heritage committee on cultural heritage matters.

Deterioration

During the conference held on Dec. 3-7, the experts discussed the status of the terraces and came up with recommendations on how to address the various issues surrounding the deterioration of the heritage sites.

"From all the presentations on the various efforts of the provincial government and the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement (Sitmo) and the interaction with local folks, the group is pleased to know that there is a determined and creative effort from the Ifugao to help restore the terraces," said Augusto Villalon, Icomos Philippines chair.

With the programs already in place, the stakeholders must sustain conservation activities with the help of the national and local governments, NGOs and Filipinos in general, he said.

Brenda Saquing, provincial administrator, said that while the Ifugao people were striving to conserve their heritage, they were also seeking the help of every individual "who believes in beauty, freedom and survival" to pitch in in restoring the rice terraces.

"After all, the Ifugao rice terraces are not the patrimony of the Ifugao alone, but of the whole humanity," she said.

Recommendations

The workshops tried to seek recommendations on how to use heritage as a resource for income generation to keep the Ifugao from leaving their families' terraces.

Among the strategies recommended were arts and crafts development, marketing of the *tinawon* rice, and the production of organic vegetables, fruits and rice wine.

The experts also believed that the adventure and agro-eco-tourism industries must be strengthened to complement the development of the product industries in Ifugao.

With this, they agreed to push the improvement of the Bagabag airport in nearby Nueva Vizcaya to cut travel time of tourists going to Ifugao. The province is at least 10 hours by land travel from Metro Manila.

Among the other recommendations was to study if abandoned terraces could be leased to other farmers or to local governments, which should devise ways to make these mountain farms productive.

"Some Ifugao farmers are practicing a system of leasing untilled lands called *uhat*. Usually the owner will let his farm be tilled by another farmer for free for three years. On the fourth year, the owner will get half of the harvest, provided that he will also share in whatever agricultural inputs or labor cost needed," said engineer Norberto Tayaban, a rice field owner.

Tayaban said many professionals who could not go to their rice farms preferred to let relatives or village mates till the lands instead of abandoning these.

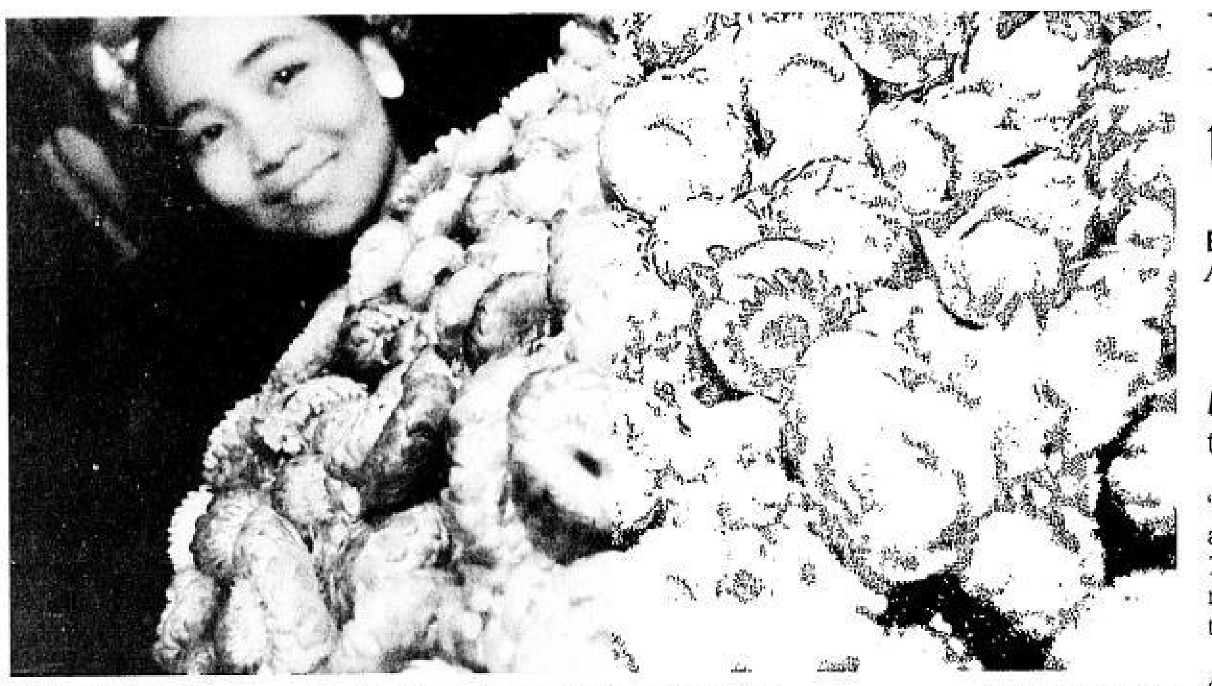
"While it is true that there are abandoned rice fields, these are usually due to lack of water in the terraces. We cannot till the land without water," said Perfecta Dulnuan, Banaue planning and development coordinator.

Dulnuan, who allows her relatives to till her rice fields, said that while rice terrace farming was not very profitable, "[we have a] responsibility to our ancestors to keep the *payo* or rice fields watered and planted."

"There is an unwritten law that we have to take care of our inheritance. A member of the community who abandons his rice fields without a reasonable [explanation] is considered lazy and disrespectful of his ancestors' toil and labor," she said.

Everlasting to restore old Baguio charm

By Vincent Cabreza
Baguio City



EVERLASTING flowers used to be a top seller among Baguio tourists.

ELMER KRISTIAN DAUIGOY

MEMORIES OF couples walking through Baguio City's foggy evenings back in the 1970s are slowly fading, and with them the charm of a more sophisticated summer capital.

That, at least, is the prevailing view in tourism circles today.

But some of the old residents have another theory they have started to test: Baguio's charm is really "everlasting."

Old Ibaloi women and their children have been tending gardens that hope to grow every three months an abundant supply of everlasting flowers—the prickly variety known more for its attractive yellow array when strung together into garlands, than for its scent.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, the everlasting garland has been a staple for souvenir-hunting tourists, alongside the miniature sculpture "man-in-the-barrel," strawberries of Benguet, and the peanut brittle and jams of nuns of the Good Shepherd Convent.

But the garlands began to disappear from the main display areas of the public market.

The city government has been campaigning for a "return to old Baguio" as part of its commitment to the Baguio Centennial in 2009.

Old memories

Local tourism relies too much on the old memories to keep the summer capital alive.

Tourism Undersecretary Eduardo Jarque Jr. recalls his own memories about dating his wife in Baguio to stress why—to the contemporary tourist—the summer capital today has a lackluster image.

"But let us not be lulled. Tourism has always been a numbers game," Jarque says.

He says communities have already proven that a place's attraction often transcends what it can provide in terms of good roads or the number of hotels with hot running water.

He says the sophisticated Baguio can "do a Batanes" by drawing "special tourists" who are attracted to its snob appeal.

City tourism officer Benedicto Alhambra, however, says conserving what made Baguio memorable to tourists must be its direction. He asks the women of the Indayog ti Sabong (Shower of Flowers) movement to revive the everlasting gardens behind the Baguio Convention Center.

The women took up the challenge because they knew that everlasting garlands never really disappeared from the market, "just from the memories of Metro Manila visitors," says Marissa Butale, 29.

Butale supervises and teaches the women about the best ways to tend to their patches.

Sense of history

She also provides the project its sense of history. "I grew up raising flowers for my parents in Lamtang village [in neighboring La Trinidad, Benguet], and I always associated everlasting with the tourists," she says.

She spent her youth stringing everlasting flowers and selling them on the streets.

"To the Ibaloi, this flower has no cultural value. It is not part of the rituals and we don't really keep them in our houses like we do [with] roses today," she says.

"But I once saw visitors from [the lowlands] with their children, and I realized they wore their school uniforms with an everlasting pinned to their lapels. To them, the everlasting was magical.

"We have vegetable farms, but we often earn back our investments from the sale of garlands. It doesn't take too much time to plant and grow the everlasting. It takes us three months, and then we can sell them."

A family earns P50,000 each year from a 250-square-meter patch of everlasting.

These days, it is—of all places—Tondo, Manila, which is the steady buyer of Baguio everlasting.

"Tondo residents use everlasting in their annual fiestas, and we are their only source. Everlasting only blooms here. We tried planting the patch in Tagaytay City and Nueva Vizcaya, but they did not take well to warm weather," Butale says.

She often shows strangers her thumb as part of her lectures about the everlasting trade. The finger is bruised and marked with healed puncture wounds.

A garland of everlasting sells at P20 today, but retailers spend many hours stringing the flowers to avoid being pricked by their texture.

"I think this is one reason only a few continue selling the garlands. I have been doing this for years, yet I need about 15 minutes to string together four garland pieces," Butale says.

Photographer returns to first love for healing

By Tonette Orejas
Angeles City

SIMPLE LA MU (They are only simple). Nothing spectacular about them."

Mario Pamintuan, called the "master of frontal attack" in the art of photography in the 1980s, tends to belittle his current output of 38 color photographs. He has reasons.

Pamintuan hasn't touched a shutter button since his last exhibit in 1999, selling all his Nikon and Mamiya systems even because, he thought, "*mate na ku* (I will die soon)."

Then, too, he returned to his first love by using only a point-and-shoot digital camera—the modern version of the "Instamatic" that he had not ever touched in his younger days.

He was rather uneasy with the shift. When he was 12 years old, Rolleiflex was his camera, a hand-me-down from his father Alberto, chief of the photo department of the defunct Clark Air Base from 1948 to the late 1950s.

He plunged back to photography, not for the art of it or an attempt to reestablish himself. It is chiefly for healing the body of this 56-year-old image hunter.

PAMINTUAN

TONETTE OREJAS

"I was trying to beat boredom out of my kidney problem. If I didn't die of that or its complications, I'll die of depression," Pamintuan says as his assistant of 20 years, Mike, mounts the photographs on the walls of Galleria Olivia at Camalig Restaurant in Angeles City.

"Angeles Mornings" is Pamintuan's sixth solo exhibit since 1977. He pooled the collection from photographs he had taken between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. almost daily since returning from the United States in September.

As in past forays, his haunts found him in familiar nooks and places in the city he called after his wife Linda, "beloved."

Frozen in frames, the images are all of common folk in common situations.

An almost toothless old man stares from the steel gates of the Sto. Rosario Church. A *tinapa* (smoked fish) maker waits for takers of his trays of smoked fish. A young salesgirl stands beside six pairs of bikini. A graying man sells colorful *suekos* (wooden clogs). Neighbors eat around a *tienda* of *arroz caldo*. Young boys laugh at the antic of a friend showing off his uncircumcised part.

In perfect timing, Pamintuan captures the joy, exuberance, haughtiness, gloom, uneasiness and unpretentiousness of people and life in his city.

To the observation that he lifts the ordinariness out of his subjects, he says: "*Ay wa, yang buri ku* (Yes, that's what I like to do)."

"Angeles Mornings" runs until Jan. 9, 2008, at the Galleria Olivia, Camalig Restaurant, Sto. Rosario Street, Angeles City.

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NEWSBRIEFS

Sayyaf frees 2 captives

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The Abu Sayyaf in Sulu on Monday set free their two hostages, who were abducted in Patikul town on Dec. 13, after two local executives exerted pressure on the bandit group.

Rolando Benitez, 48, and Edmar Molina, 35, were recovered along Barangay Km. 20 in Patikul around 9 p.m.

The victims work for Panglima Estino Mayor Munib Estino.

"This is the first time that the bandits did not harm their Christian victims," Estino said.

On April 17, seven workers of former Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong were beheaded by the bandits in Parang town after their demand for a P5-million ransom was rejected.

Estino said he and Patikul Mayor Kabir Elias Hayudini used "soft and hard approaches" in the safe recovery of the victims.

Julie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

Mobile IT classroom launched

STUDENTS of remote Siargao and Bucas Grande Islands will now have access to information technology through a mobile IT classroom made possible by a congressman.

Rep. Francisco Matugas launched the mobile IT classroom in the two areas recently.

Matugas, chair of the board of trustees of the Siargao Island Institute of Technology (SIIT), turned over the IT classroom to the SIIT during the school's 11th founding anniversary.

Matugas, in a press statement, said he received a symbolic key to the bus that was converted into the mobile IT classroom.

The air-condition bus is equipped with 20 laptops, an LCD projector, VCD player, CDs and sound system.

It was a joint project of Matugas and the Department of Science and Technology. Matugas has pledged his personal funds for the operation and maintenance of the mobile classroom, including Internet connection.

Heist in telecoms office

DIGOS CITY—Armed men took off with more than P60,000 from a branch of the RCPI here past 1 p.m. Monday.

Marlyn Abiso, an RCPI employee, said they mistook the suspects for customers and decided to let them in even though they were having their lunch break.

Abiso said as soon as the suspects were allowed in, they immediately drew out their handguns and declared a robbery.

The lone security guard manning the RCPI branch was disarmed, she said.

Orlando Dinoy, Inquirer Mindanao

Youth poll recount ordered

TANGUB CITY—A court has ordered the suspension of elections for Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) federation officers here pending a recount of votes for the SK chair of Barangay Maquilao.

"This raised the possibility the city may not be able to elect a new set of SK federation officials toward the end of this year," Robiconceasar Agcopra, city local government operations officer, said.

Agcopra said Judge Rodolfo Vapor, of the Municipal Trial Court in Cities, issued a temporary restraining order (TRO), dated Dec. 3, against the holding of the SK federation elections.

The TRO, valid until Dec. 23, was based on a petition by Christine Abatayo against the proclamation of her rival, Jun Cris Aquaviva, for the chairmanship of the SK in Maquilao village. ***Ryan D. Rosauro, Inquirer Mindanao***

Gov gives cash gifts

MAASIN CITY—Southern Leyte Gov. Damian Mercado played Santa Claus as he gave out cash during the Christmas party of the provincial capitol, which was held last Friday.

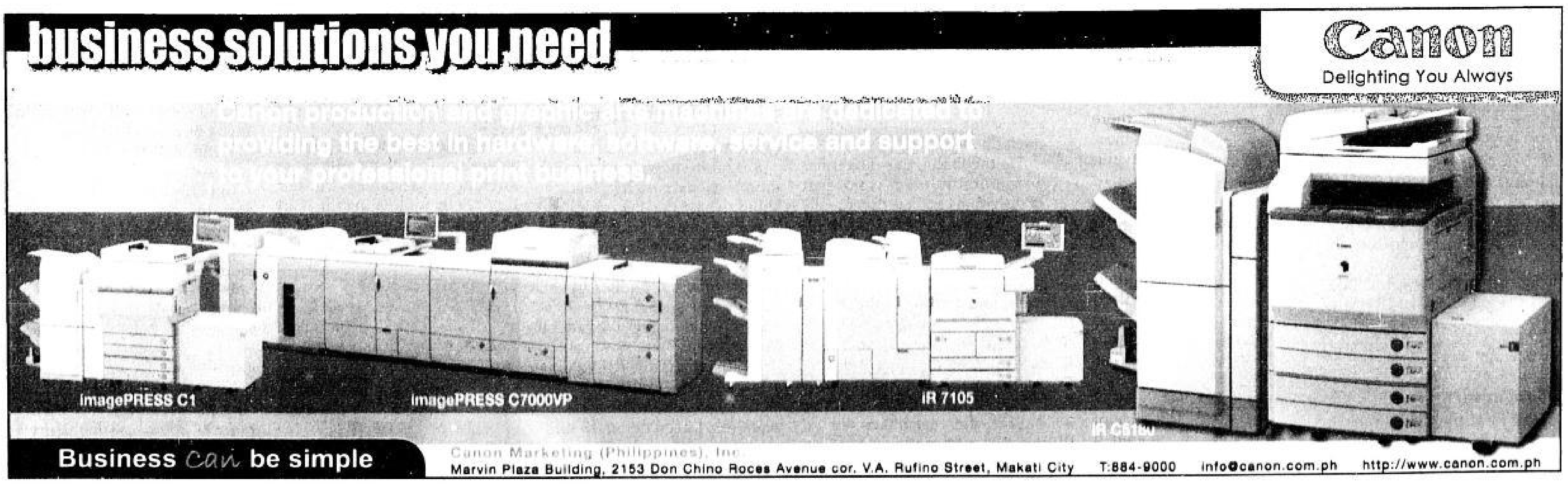
After announcing that Capitol employees will receive P20,000 additional bonus, he also distributed cash to the employees and their children, including members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan. Aside from the cash, they also received rice and sardines.

Calling all the employees to queue, he handed P200 in crisp 100 peso bills to each of the 700 employees. He then called the children, numbering more than 50, and handed P50 to each of them.

On the other hand, the provincial board members received P5,000 each. Mercado also raffled off four TV sets.

While the people were dancing, the governor threw into the air crisp 20 peso bills leaving everybody scrambling. This was done several times during the party.

Jani Arnaiz, Inquirer Visayas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GMA 7 says it's 'equally interested' in AGB Nielsen case

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

BROADCASTING GIANT GMA Network Inc. said it could not have been involved in the case filed by rival television network ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. against global television ratings company AGB Nielsen Media Research over the alleged "systematic, organized and well-funded attempt" to rig television ratings.

In a statement yesterday, GMA Network said it "is equally interested" in finding the perpetrators of the reported ratings fraud.

"GMA is equally interested in getting to the bottom of this allegation. The network is determined to find out whether or not the ratings survey can indeed be tampered with," it said in a statement yesterday.

ABS-CBN filed a P63-million civil case before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court on Friday against AGB Nielsen for damages and injunction with an application for a temporary restraining order for the media research firm to shut down its service and investigate the extent of the ratings breach.

ABS-CBN was also silent in naming "the other network" involved in the alleged cheating in the ratings saying that its issue was with AGB Nielsen.

Not GMA?

GMA, meanwhile, said the alleged informant of ABS-CBN "must be referring to a station other than GMA Network in the case it filed against AGB Nielsen."

"It does not make sense that the informant who claimed he was hired to locate and bribe metered households should do so in Bacolod, considering that no separate ratings data for Bacolod are being released by AGB yet," GMA said.

It also expressed doubts over claims by ABS-CBN's informant that he was able to allegedly locate 89 meter devices in Bacolod.

GMA said Bacolod would account for only about 8 percent of the total urban TV households in the Visayas, according to computations based on the National Statistics Office (NSO) population figures and AC Nielsen figures from their 2000 Fact Book.

Low ratings

It said 89 meter devices would represent more than 22 percent of the total panel homes in the Visayas.

To also prove that it was not involved in the tampering, GMA said its ratings in the provinces—particularly in the Visayas and Mindanao—have not shown any significant improvement since July of 2007 when it started to subscribe to the ratings of AGB Nielsen.

"The programs of ABS-CBN mentioned by it as having been affected by the alleged tampering have experienced consistently high ratings in the Visayas. In contrast, their counterpart programs on GMA rated low based on data from AGB (Nielsen)," GMA said.

Free TV vs cable

GMA observed that "it is only in the Philippines that the ratings of programs on non-cable or free TV households exhibit a very different behavior from the cable households. Coincidentally, the Philippines is also the only country in the world where a competing free-to-air TV station also operates or controls the dominant cable company."

Dominant cable television operator Central CATV Inc. or more popularly known as SkyCable is owned 66.5 percent by a Lopez-controlled holding firm SkyVision Corp. and 33.5 percent by the group of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.(PLDT).

In turn, ABS-CBN owns 10.2 percent of SkyVision Corp.

GMA Network said it sent letters to AGB Nielsen long before ABS-CBN's complaint and these letters show how much the network wants to find out if there are indeed irregularities in the ratings data gathering process.

Ongoing investigation

AGB Nielsen said yesterday that it had previously advised ABS-CBN that it was undertaking an exhaustive investigation into the activities of GMA Network and analyzing whether or not these activities had had an impact on viewing data.

In a press statement sent yesterday to the INQUIRER, Maya Reforma, AGB Nielsen general manager, said its contract with ABS-CBN expressly grants AGB Nielsen a reasonable period, not to exceed one month, to investigate issues concerning quality of data and present its findings in writing.

"The filing of the suit before the Quezon City court by ABS-CBN against us without full observance of this provision is by the terms of our contract premature, and is extremely disappointing," she added.

Until such time as there is hard evidence to indicate that the ratings data had been unduly influenced by GMA's activities, AGB Nielsen would continue to provide data to the marketplace, Reforma said.

Batasan blast claims life of sixth victim

From page A1

MORE than a month after the Nov. 13, 2007 bombing, a congressional aide succumbs to severe injuries he sustained in the explosion at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City that police described as "solved but not closed." INQUIRER PHOTO

gunned down by the police in the raid but he denied involvement in the Batasan attack in which his staunch political rival, Akbar, was killed.

Police said Akbar was the target of the blast.

In the last elections, Salapuddin, a former commander of the Moro National Liberation Front, ran and lost to Akbar's wife Jum in the Basilan gubernatorial race.

Letterhead

At a press conference on Nov. 16, police showed reporters items recovered from the raid, including documents for a Honda XRM motorcycle, various tools, nine cell phones, pictures, ID cards, ATM cards, driver's licenses, a motorcycle helmet and various calling cards.

Three of the calling cards were from the congressional office of Salapuddin, and an envelope with the letterhead of Salapuddin's congressional office.

PNP Director General Avelino Razon said the raid established a strong link between the explosion and the three suspects killed in Payatas and three others arrested in the raid.

The deed of sale on a motorcycle believed to have been used to deliver the bomb that exploded at the Batasan parking lot carried a Chassis No. XRM 13-066-203-339.

Petition for habeas corpus

Police said the numbers 066203339 appeared in the bar code recovered from the damaged motorcycle used in the blast.

A Quezon City court yesterday heard the petition for the issuance of habeas corpus filed by the relatives of three suspects in the bombing.

But Judge Thelma Ponferrada of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 104 deferred the hearing as the Office of the Solicitor General was unprepared to present its evidence to counter the petition filed by the kin of suspects Caidar Aunal, Adham Kusain and Ikram Indama. The hearing was postponed to 2 p.m. Wednesday.

Illegally imprisoned

Aunal, Adham and Indama were brought to the court by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) from the PNP Custodial Center in Camp Crame where they are detained.

In their petition, Rasmia Aunal, Juloy Kusain and Asraf Indama claimed that their relatives were "illegally imprisoned" and were being held incommunicado by their custodians in Camp Crame.

They further accused the police custodians of subjecting their relatives to torture.

Aunal and Kusain are at the PNP Custodial Center while Indama is detained at the CIDG National Capital Region office.

All were arrested on Nov. 15 in a joint police and military raid on Block 4 Lot 23, Anahaw St., Parkwood Hills in Payatas.

No case filed vs suspects

The petitioners claimed that although the three were charged as respondents in the Batasan blast, "not a single case has been filed in court against Aunal, Kusain and Indama. The 36 hours following their arrest lapsed without a case being filed against them."

Relatives further claimed that the three suspects were made to sign waivers of Article 125 of the Revised Penal Code assisted by a CIDG-provided lawyer, Alvin Sarita, after their kin had been detained for four days "and should have been released, as no case yet has been (filed) against them."

Article 125 of the Revised Penal Code penalizes the delay in the delivery of detainees to the proper judicial authorities. It provides punishment for any public officer who detains any person but fails to deliver him or her to the proper judicial authorities within 36 hours.

Self-incriminating statements

The petitioners further alleged that the CIDG-provided lawyer assisted the suspects in "making self-incriminating sworn statements before investigators," five of which contained Indama's alleged confession of his participation in the bombing of Batasan's south wing.

The petitioners also said that the continued detention of the three suspects posed a serious threat to their mental and physical health.

They asked the court to issue the writ to produce the three suspects and release them from custody.

The suspects' kin also asked the judge to declare the detention illegal and the testimonies taken from them inadmissible as evidence.

PNP postpones release of Glorietta 2 blast report

From page A1

THE FULL story behind the deadly explosion at the Glorietta 2 mall in Makati City on Oct. 19, 2007 will be known next year. INQUIRER PHOTO

relevant to the investigation.

Ticman stressed, however, that this would not change the police conclusion that the blast was a result of a gas buildup, nor would it affect the cases the police planned to file later as a result of their investigation.

"We are trying to be very accurate and thorough in this investigation. We continue to visit and revisit the areas (of investigation)," Ticman said.

Won't sacrifice quality

Ayala Land Inc. (ALI), the owner of the Glorietta malls in Makati, has stood firm on its position that the Oct. 19 explosion could not have been caused by methane gas or diesel fumes.

Ticman refused to give details on what new evidence he said the investigators had found. He said the important thing for the Multi-Agency Investigative Task Force (MAITF) conducting the probe was "not to sacrifice the quality of the investigation."

The MAITF is composed of agencies like the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the PNP. The task force also used the services of chemical engineers and experts in petrochemicals.

The police investigation has been focused on the basement of the mall where probers said accumulated toxic gases were ignited, possibly from an electrical source, and caused the explosion.

The blast killed 11 people and injured over 100 others.

Ayala contests police theory

Immediately after the blast, the PNP said it appeared to have been caused by liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Later, it scrapped this theory and said it was a gas explosion.

A few weeks ago, the PNP said it had concluded with finality that the blast was the result of a gas explosion and not a bomb.

Ayala Land contested the PNP's theory, saying there was no chance toxic gases had accumulated in the mall's basement.

The other day, Ticman said police planned to file charges against those responsible after the final report shall have been released.

'Lapses and negligence'

Ticman said then that there were "lapses and negligence" on the part of certain individuals that could have caused the blast.

He did not say who were responsible for the negligence but said that probers had identified them in the course of their investigation.

Ticman also said the charges they would be filing were negligence resulting in multiple homicide and serious to slight physical injuries.

Also the other day, Puno said in a speech in Camp Crame that the case was "on the verge of being solved" and that "some negligence was involved."

Review, review

Puno also said he had ordered Ticman and his team to "review it (the final report), review it, and review it again."

Puno also revealed that the task force was all set to come out with its findings but that he ordered them to review the report one more time.

"We want to make sure we don't accuse wrongly anyone of being negligent about anything. How high up does that (responsibility) goes is being ascertained now," Puno told reporters.

Findings of negligence

"There is negligence on the part of individuals," Puno said.

"Whether it amounts to corporate negligence is something being assessed because you cannot jump to that conclusion. There are two separate corporations that are involved in the ownership of that facility there. There are different people involved in the maintenance of that facility. There were specific reasons for a gas buildup. I assure you that the investigation will be very precise in identifying liabilities and responsibilities."

Ticman's statement that investigators had asked for a January deadline marked the latest delay in the release of the final report on the blast.

On Nov. 22, police had said the final report would be out in two to three weeks.

Dual responsibility

The Glorietta basement where the explosion occurred had been under the direct control of the Makati Supermarket, which has a land-lease contract with ALI, although both tenant and landlord were responsible for the maintenance of the building.

Officials of ALI disputed the theory that a buildup of methane gas and diesel fumes triggered the explosion, citing the findings of their own foreign consultants.

ALI had suggested that the police abandon their "primary hypothesis" that the combination of methane from the sump pits and fumes from the diesel tank in the basement caused the blast, and asked investigators to probe other possibilities.

Property bust? Lunar land prices are rocketing

From page A1

Internet searches for lunar land prices show the cost of buying an acre of the moon's surface has risen 40 percent since the start of 2007, investment bank UBS told clients in a tongue-in-cheek analysis.

Lacing a yearend note with caveats, and not a little holiday cheer, UBS strategists said their "esoteric research" of archived news reports suggests lunar property trends may even be a leading indicator of US house prices.

Rising sharply between 1997 and 2001, the cost of a slice of land on the moon suffered a mid-cycle retreat in 2002-03 after the dotcom bubble burst, the bank said.

But prices defied gravity to hit record highs of $37 per acre in December 2005—nine months before US housing peaked.

Their fall to earth was a step ahead too, with lunar prices dropping 56 percent to $16 per acre between 2005 and January 2007, the report said.

"Our calculations suggest lunar land prices appear to be a reasonable lead indicator of US house prices by around 12 months. This suggests a trough in US house prices may occur around the beginning of 2008," the bank said.

Germans have big slice of moon

Quick to caution against "preliminary" conclusions, UBS added: "This is most certainly not a forecast."

United Nations' treaties insist governments cannot claim ownership of the moon. But attempts to close a loophole allowing individuals or firms to do so have failed to garner support.

US President George W. Bush announced in 2004 that the United States planned to send astronauts back to the moon by 2020.

But, citing claims by a "leading lunar real estate agent," the UBS report said Germans were already the No. 1 owners of moon property—followed by Swedes, English and Poles.

Reuters

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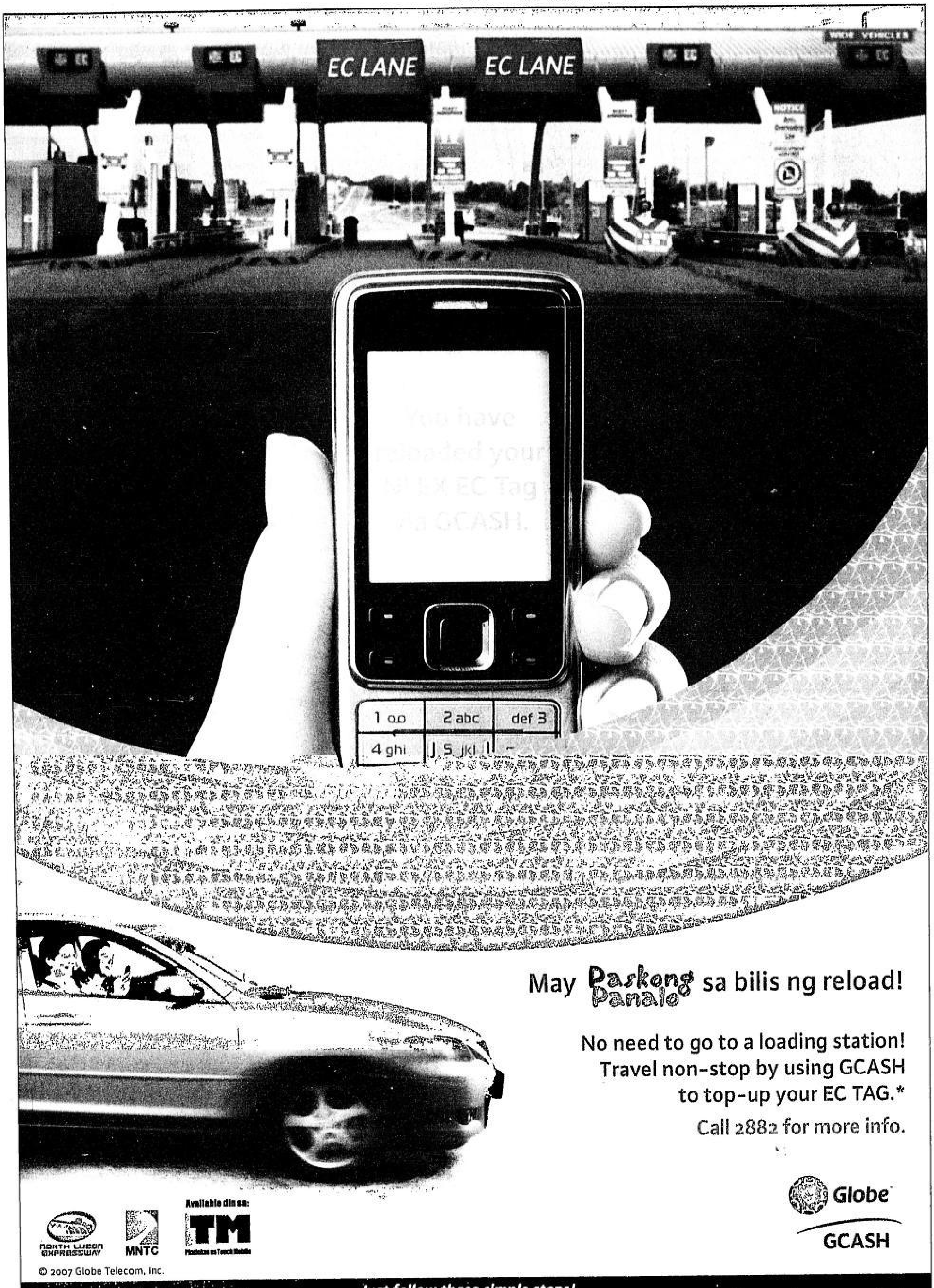

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House OKs cheaper meds bill

A PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE has accused the United States Trade Representative's office here of attempting to influence the deliberations on the Cheaper Medicines Bill in the interest of transnational pharmaceutical companies, many of them US-based.

The consolidated HB 2844 was passed on third and final reading last night. In an unusual show of unity, all 205 congressmen present in plenary voted in favor of the measure.

Earlier, Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros yesterday distributed to reporters copies of a "position paper" that she claimed was being circulated by the US Trade Representative's office among members of the House committee on trade and industry that is steering the bill's passage through the House.

The committee, chaired by Palawan Rep. Antonio Alvarez, has consolidated 24 measures designed to increase the poor's access to medicines by, among other things, allowing parallel importation of patented medicines and revising the Intellectual Property Code which provides protection for holders of medicine patents.

The position paper contained comments and suggestions, purportedly coming from the US government, on how certain provisions of HB 2844 can be worded.

At a press briefing yesterday, Hontiveros said the US trade representative ought to be reminded that the Philippines "is not a colony of your country."

Shalimar Vitan, policy coordinator of the UK-based Oxfam international aid agency, said the document was also intended for the Philippines' Intellectual Property Office.

"This is the unseen hand" that is trying to influence the Cheaper Medicines Bill, Vitan told a press briefing.

Alvarez said he had been approached by the office of the US Trade Representative regarding its concerns about HB 2844.

He said the American Chamber of Commerce had also written to Speaker Jose de Venecia concerning the bill.

But Alvarez said "it was nothing. They just raised their concerns sometime ago, but I didn't mind them." *Christian V. Esguerra*

Transco: Done deal—Miriam

SENATORS DO NOT SEE ANY MAJOR ROADblocks to the takeover by the Monte Oro Grid Resources consortium of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) despite plans by the Senate to scrutinize the bidding.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said the bidding for the government's power transmission grid was "very open" and the subject of conflict of interest charges, businessman Enrique Razon, had declared he would divest his 2 percent interest in Monte Oro once the consortium won.

Monte Oro beat the rival bid of the group led by San Miguel Corp.'s Ramon Ang $3.95 billion to $3.905 billion.

"There should be no problem with that [an investigation] because there is a resolution anyway. Although there is a resolution, we should just go through the process," said Senate President Manny Villar.

Santiago, chair of the Joint Congressional Power Commission, said her main focus would be the conflict of interest issue between the auctioneer, Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (Psalm) president Jose Ibazeta, and Razon. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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A plus METRO

Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

GIANT TREE, GLITTERY LIGHTS
Residents of Las Piñas City celebrate during yesterday's ceremonial lighting of the giant Christmas tree at the City Hall grounds.
ROGER MARGALLO

Bunevacz seeks help from NBI

Ex-decathlete says partners hurt him

By Tina G. Santos

FORMER DECATHLETE DAVID BUNEVACZ HAS filed a complaint for physical injuries against four of his business associates whom he accused of manhandling him.

Bunevacz, president and chief executive officer of the Beverly Hills 6750 Cosmetic Surgery and Skin Institute—a beauty clinic on Ayala Avenue, Makati City which caters to the rich—filed the complaint in the National Bureau of Investigation on Dec. 5.

The following day, he and his wife, former talent manager Jessica Rodriguez who is in charge of promoting the clinic, left for the United States for what the couple called their annual Christmas vacation.

Bunevacz's complaint confirmed rumors that he was beaten up last month by men who allegedly wanted to question him about reports that he was misusing the clinic's funds.

Lawyer Sixto Burgos Jr., chief of the NBI Anti-Kidnapping, Hijacking and Armed Robbery Division, said it was Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla who had suggested that the couple seek the help of the bureau.

In his complaint, Bunevacz told the NBI that sometime last month, his business associates asked him to meet them in Greenhills, San Juan.

"He (Bunevacz) claimed that he was manhandled and they boxed his ears," Sixto said. "He also alleged that the group forcibly took his Porsche, a watch worth P1 million and his cell phone."

According to Burgos, one of the men reportedly told Bunevacz in Filipino, "You'd better leave before anything bad happens to you."

He added that the couple had asked the NBI to provide them with security.

"With regards to the embezzlement issue, David said all the expenses he made were justified," Burgos told the media.

There have been reports that the couple's business partners had accused them of embezzling P20 million of the clinic's funds, citing as proof a check allegedly made out by Bunevacz which he used as a deposit on a luxury car worth P5.6 million that he gave to his wife. The check, the reports alleged, was a company check.

The couple would later confirm in a statement that there was a disagreement between them and their associates but added that they were trying to reach an amicable settlement, reports said.

The Bunevaczes also said they would return to the country next year.

4 Korean traders in hot water for unpaid bar bills

By Allison W. Lopez

A CITY COUNCILOR YESTERday filed estafa charges in the Manila Regional Trial Court against four Koreans who allegedly refused to pay the P54,000 bill they had racked up in his bar.

Manila Councilor Roderick Valbuena, who manages The Heart of Manila on Adriatico Street, Malate said Korean businessmen Song Byung Hoon, Choy Sy Yong, Kim Syun Tae and Seo Bum Sik went to the establishment on Dec. 15 and ordered food and liquor.

He added that several hours later, the four, who were already drunk, refused to pay their bill, saying it was "too much." They then tore several dollar bills in front of the bar personnel and manager.

When a waiter tried to pacify the group, Tae and Sik told him, "Who are you? F**k you Filipinos!" Valbuena said in his affidavit. According to him, he approached the four Koreans, introduced himself as a Manila councilor and asked them what their complaint was. Hoon, however, reportedly made a rude gesture while saying, "You do not know me, f**k you councilor!" while his companions laughed.

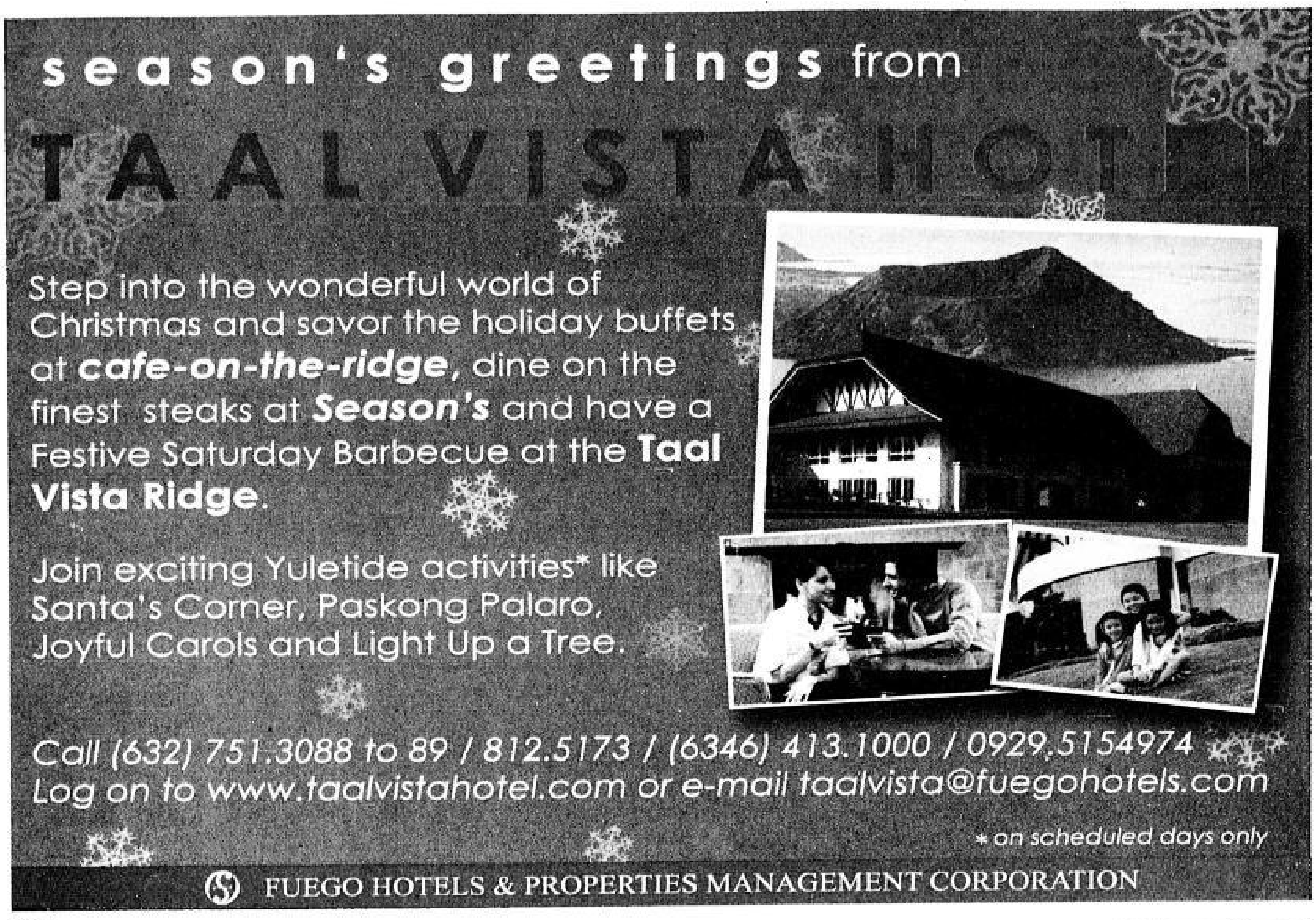
Valbuena said his wife also tried to intervene but she was ignored and shoved aside by Yong.

At this point, the councilor said he called up the police who immediately arrested the Koreans.

"The actuations of these foreigners cannot be allowed in our country," Valbuena said. "It is only fitting that we prevent them from doing the same things against our countrymen. For this reason, I am filing a deportation case in the Bureau of Immigration against the aforementioned aliens for being undesirable aliens," he added.

THE DEPARTMENT of Labor and Employment, which has its head office in Intramuros, Manila, is the primary government agency tasked to promote employment opportunities, develop human resources, protect workers and maintain industrial peace.

It started as a small bureau in 1908 and became a department on Dec. 8, 1933 by virtue of Act 4121. It now has 16 regional offices, 34 overseas posts, six bureaus, seven staff services and 11 attached agencies, including the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, National Wages and Productivity Commission and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. *Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research*



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Inventory of Pasig City ballot boxes underway

By Kristine L. Alave

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS YESterday started its inventory of 1,317 ballot boxes from Pasig City after former Congressman Robert "Dodot" Jaworski Jr. and incumbent Mayor Robert Eusebio filed electoral protests against each other.

A team from the local Comelec office and watchers from the camps of Jaworski and Eusebio inspected and sealed the ballot boxes from the city's second district which were stocked at the ground floor of City Hall.

The inventory started around 10 a.m. yesterday, a day behind its original schedule.

Ma. Anne Gonzales, Pasig City's Comelec chief, said they expect the inventory to be finished by Dec. 20.

After that, the boxes would be transferred to the Comelec office in Manila where the Electoral Contests Adjudication Department would recount the votes.

Jaworski, who ran but lost in the mayoral race held last May 14, had requested the poll body to open and recount all of the votes cast in the city's second district which has 1,067 precincts.

Eusebio, who was declared the winner, responded by filing a counter-protest. He asked the Comelec for a recount of the votes cast in the first district's 250 precincts.

Based on the Comelec's final tally, Eusebio garnered 116,463 votes against Jaworski's 107,141 votes.

Richard Nethercott, Jaworski's lawyer, said they would scrutinize the election returns from ballot boxes in Pinagbuhatan, Napico, Manggahan, Floodway and Maybunga, considered the largest and highly populated areas in the city.

They also have the biggest numbers of indigent residents in Pasig, city officials said.

"The returns from these places are questionable," Nethercott said, adding that these were the areas where Jaworski's legal team and watchers had witnessed "irregularities" during the canvassing.

Sixto Brillantes, Eusebio's lawyer, however, said that his client had won by a comfortable margin against Jaworski which was an indication of the people's support.

Woman in alleged title scam charged

By Tina G.Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGAtion has filed a charge against a woman who was allegedly involved in a land title scam.

Charged with syndicated estafa in the Manila Prosecutor's Office was Amor Villegas, of Sta. Rosa Village, Malabon City.

However, the prosecutor downgraded the case to attempted estafa, which is a bailable offense. The suspect was released after posting bail, the NBI said.

The case stemmed from a complaint filed by three businesswoman identified as Marizon de la Cruz, Hydee Uy and Amy Go, who claimed they were duped by the suspect.

But lawyer Angelito Magno, chief of the NBI Special Action Unit, said they expect more victims to come forward and file complaints against the suspects.

An investigation showed that sometime in 2005, Villegas, showing a certificate of title, offered De la Cruz an 11,400 sq m lot located in Malabon City. The complainant said she gave staggered cash payments to the suspect, who in turn, issued checks equivâlent to the amount which the former shelled out.

However, when the complainant's payment reached more than P5 million, the suspect was nowhere to be found.

The complainant later found out that the lot title given to her by the suspect was fake, the NBI said, adding that the suspect even issued bouncing checks to De la Cruz.

This prompted the complainants to seek the help of the NBI which immediately formed a team for an entrapment operation.

METROBRIEFS

Vendor against vendor: I dead

POLICE are trying to determine why an ice cream vendor stabbed dead a fellow vendor at midnight yesterday in Taguig City. Authorities identified the victim as Manuel Espiritu, 24, a native of Marinduque and resident of Purok 13, South Daang Hari, Barangay Tanyag. SPO2 Gracio Cangco said that a witness saw Jessie Aviera, 28, running away from Espiritu's house at 12:20 a.m. yesterday, with blood on his hands and body. The witness said she immediately informed the police who arrested the suspect.

Julie M. Aurelio

Suspected car thief arrested

A MAN accused of stealing the sports utility vehicle of a retired Navy officer in Quezon City on Monday was arrested a few hours later in Bulacan. Operatives of the Quezon City Police District Anti-Carnapping Unit and the Bulacan police nabbed Cesar Poso, 31, a resident of Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City, while he was driving a gray Ford Everest (RBS 627) on Monday in Balagtas, Bulacan. The vehicle, according to the police, had been taken from its owner, Orville Cruzata, several hours before. Operatives of the QCPD-ANCAR alerted other policemen in Bulacan and Pampanga who also started looking for the vehicle. Poso and the recovered SUV were later taken to the QCPD headquarters in Camp Karingal.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Ex-NBI confidential agent, 2 others charged

FORMER National Bureau of Investigation confidential agent Martin Soriano and two other investigators were charged at the Manila Regional Trial Court yesterday for failing to inform their fellow agents, whom they had arrested on drug charges, of their rights. Solicitor General Agnes Devanadera said there was probable cause to indict Soriano, who became controversial after being tied to kidnapping and drug charges. Also charged were intelligence agent Allan Santiago and special investigator Pio Palencia for violating Sec. 4 (a) of R.A. 7438, which prescribes the right of persons arrested to "remain silent and have a competent and independent counsel." Devanadera, however, dismissed the complaints of kidnapping, grave threats, coercion, unlawful arrest, incriminatory machinations, robbery and violation of Republic Act 6713 filed by NBI special investigator Clenio Calleja and former security guard Amador Lumbre against the three. According to the complainants, the three men arrested them on Aug. 25, 1997 in Manila and accused them of being drug pushers. Devanadera said there was reason to charge Soriano, Santiago and Palencia because the records did not show that they had informed the complainants of their rights.

Allison W. Lopez

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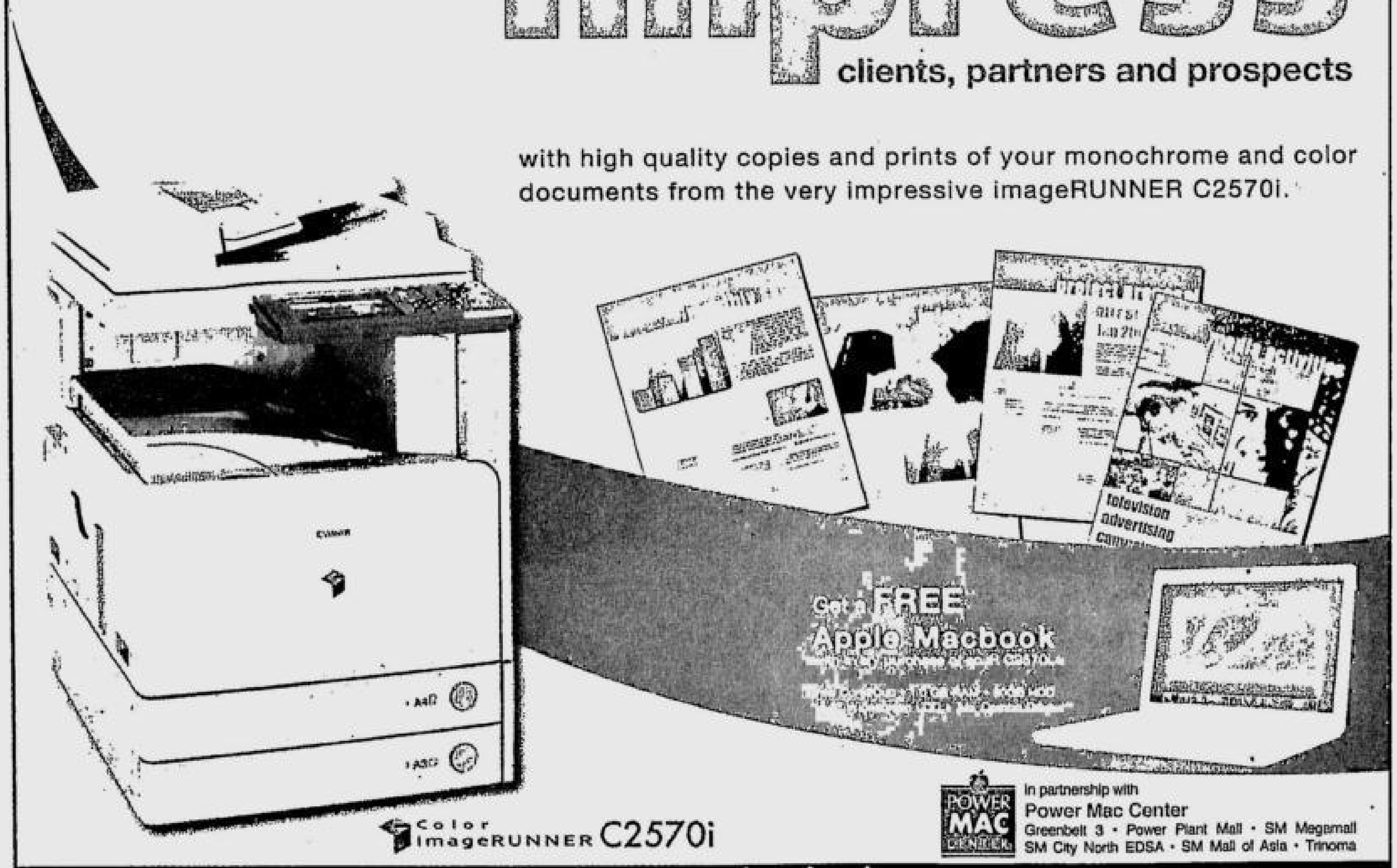

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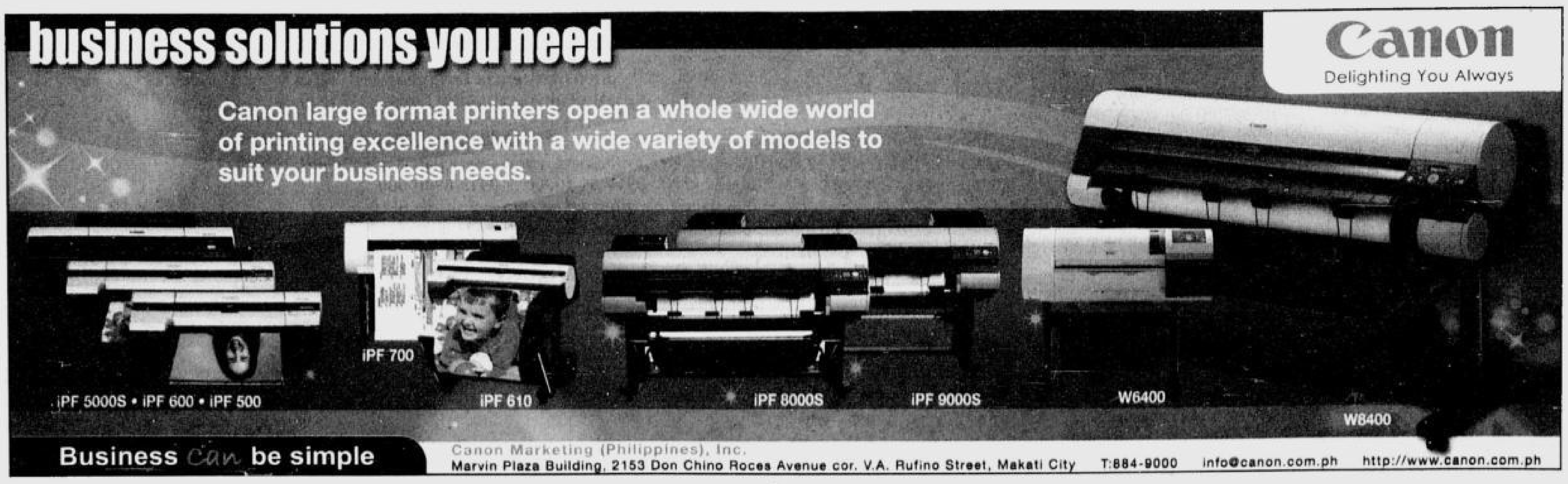

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Donors pledge $7.4 B for Palestinians

PARIS—INTERNATIONAL DONORS PLEDGED $7.4 billion to the Palestinians on Monday at a conference described by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as the "last hope" to save their government from bankruptcy.

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad had formally asked donors meeting in Paris for $5.6 billion by 2010 to help fulfill his plan to develop a viable economy for a future state.

"The real winner is the Palestinian state;" French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told AFP as he announced that a total of $7.4 billion had been promised.

The pledges were made at a one-day conference convened to agree a package of aid to stabilize the Palestinian economy and shore up peace efforts with Israel.

"We see this conference as an important vote of confidence on the part of the international community," Fayyad said as the conference wrapped up.

But Islamist group Hamas, which seized control of the Gaza Strip in June and was not invited to Paris nor to a meeting in the US city of Annapolis last month, labelled it a "dangerous conspiraçy" aimed at dividing the Palestinians.

"We support all forms of aid, financial or otherwise, to the Palestinian people. But the Paris conference is coating poison with honey and is a dangerous conspiracy," Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barhum said in a statement released in Gaza.

Some humanitarian groups questioned the benefit of such a massive aid package.

In London, the development charity Oxfam warned donors were pouring cash "into a leaking bucket," arguing that aid efforts already in place were being seriously hampered by Israeli restrictions on movement.

"The challenge is to fix the leak, not pour faster … Due to Israel's movement restrictions and the blockade of Gaza, millions of dollars of aid for Palestinians are being lost," Oxfam's Middle East director Adam Leach said.

But Tony Blair, Middle East envoy for the diplomatic "Quartet," said the money would be used for "building the capacity and the institutions for the (Palestinian) state." "Over the next few months what we have got to show to people is that we are capable of making the difference on the ground," he said.

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas had earlier warned the almost 90 delegations that the West Bank and Gaza were facing a "total catastrophe" without their aid.

Pledges quickly came pouring in with Rice announcing a US donation of $555 million for 2008, including $150 million for budget support.

"The Palestinian Authority is experiencing a serious budgetary crisis. This conference is literally the government's last hope to avoid bankruptcy," Rice said. *AFP*

Castro says he won't cling to office

CASTRO AP

HAVANA—AILING CUBAN leader Fidel Castro said in a letter read on television on Monday that he would not cling to office or obstruct the rise of a new generation of leaders, raising speculation about his political future.

"My basic duty is not to cling to office, nor even more so to obstruct the rise of people much younger, but to pass on experiences and ideas whose modest value arises from the exceptional era in which I lived," said Castro, who stepped aside from Cuba's presidency "temporarily" more than 16 months ago after undergoing surgery.

Castro, 81, appeared to hint in his letter that he would leave the country's top leadership to his brother Raul Castro, 76, who has served as interim leader since July 31, 2006.

Castro has not been seen in public other than on television since his surgery, but weekly opinion pieces of his on global affairs have been published in Cuba's newspapers since March.

Questions about his political future arose after he was nominated as a candidate to the National Assembly earlier this month, making him officially eligible to resume the presidency if he should be elected to the assembly in January.

Cuban officials have said Fidel Castro keeps up with official business while he is recovering in an undisclosed location, but there has been no official indication of whether or when he would resume the presidency.

Nor has there been any clear information about the state of his health during his lengthy convalescence.

In his letter, Fidel Castro said he fully concurred with Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, who just turned 100, in that "you have to stick to your principles till the end." He said he was "deeply convinced" that the problems now facing Cuba require more solutions "than those contained in a chessboard." "Not even a single detail can be overlooked, and it is never an easy task when human intelligence in a revolutionary society is called to prevail over its instincts." *AFP*

REUTERS

MAMMALOGIST Martua Sinaga (left photo) holds a Mallomys giant rat that was found in the Foja Mountains in Indonesia's Papua province. At right is a pygmy possum found in the same place.

Giant rat, tiny possum discovered in Indonesia

JAKARTA—RESEARCHERS IN a remote jungle in Indonesia have discovered a giant rat and a tiny possum that are apparently new to science, underscoring the stunning biodiversity of the Southeast Asian nation, scientists said on Monday.

Unearthing new species of mammals in the 21st century is considered very rare. The discoveries by a team of American and Indonesian scientists are being studied further to confirm their status.

The animals were found in the Foja mountains rainforest in eastern Papua province in a June expedition, said US-based Conservation International, which organized the trip along with the Indonesian Institute of Science.

"The giant rat is about five times the size of a typical city rat," said Kristofer Helgen, a scientist with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. "With no fear of humans, it apparently came into the camp several times during the trip."

The possum was described as "one of the worlds smallest marsupials."

A 2006 expedition to the same stretch of jungle—dubbed by Conservation International as a "Lost World" because until then humans had rarely visited it—unearthed scores of exotic new species of palms, butterflies and palms.

Papua has some of the world's largest tracts of rainforest, but like elsewhere in Indonesia they are being ravaged by illegal logging. Scientists said last year that the Foja area was not under immediate threat, largely because it was so remote.

"It's comforting to know that there is a place on Earth so isolated that it remains the absolute realm of wild nature," said expedition leader Bruce Beehler. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Test missile shot down

TOKYO—Japan said on Tuesday that it had successfully shot down a ballistic missile over the Pacific as part of joint efforts with the United States to erect a shield against possible attacks from North Korea. Japan tested the US-developed Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) interceptor from a warship in waters off Hawaii, becoming the first US ally to successfully intercept a target using the system. *AFP*

Mob arrests

ROME—Police in Italy and Germany on Tuesday arrested four members of an Italian crime family linked to the execution-style killings of six Italians in Germany last August. A police statement said two of the arrests were made in Germany and the other two in Calabria, the poor southern Italian region that is home to the Ndrangheta crime group, the area's version of the Sicilian Mafia. *Reuters*

Protests vs China

BEIJING—China on Tuesday said it was "highly concerned" at anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam, after the second rally in a month there over rival claims in the South China Sea. Several hundred people marched in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City on Sunday in the long-simmering dispute over the Spratly and Paracel archipelagos in the South China Sea. *AFP*

Troop incursion

ARBIL, IRAQ—A group of 300 Turkish troops crossed into Kurdish territory in northern Iraq overnight and moved 2-3 kilometers deeper into Iraq on Tuesday morning, a senior Iraqi military source told Reuters. The source said the Turkish troops were lightly armed and had moved into the Gali Rash area, a mountainous district near the border. There were no reports of clashes, the source said. *Reuters*

Norway plans 1st shipping tunnel

OSLO—NORWAY has drawn up plans to build the world's first shipping tunnel which would save time and money for vessels passing through a coastal area known for its dangerous seas.

Strong winds, high waves and powerful currents in the area of Stad on the southwest coast of Norway cause long delays while ships wait for calmer conditions.

A recent report from the Norwegian Coastal Administration recommended building the 1,700-meter (5,577 feet) tunnel and concluded that it would be cost effective.

The tunnel, estimated to cost around $310 million and take five years to build, would cut through a peninsula, saving ships the risky journey around the coastline. *Reuters*

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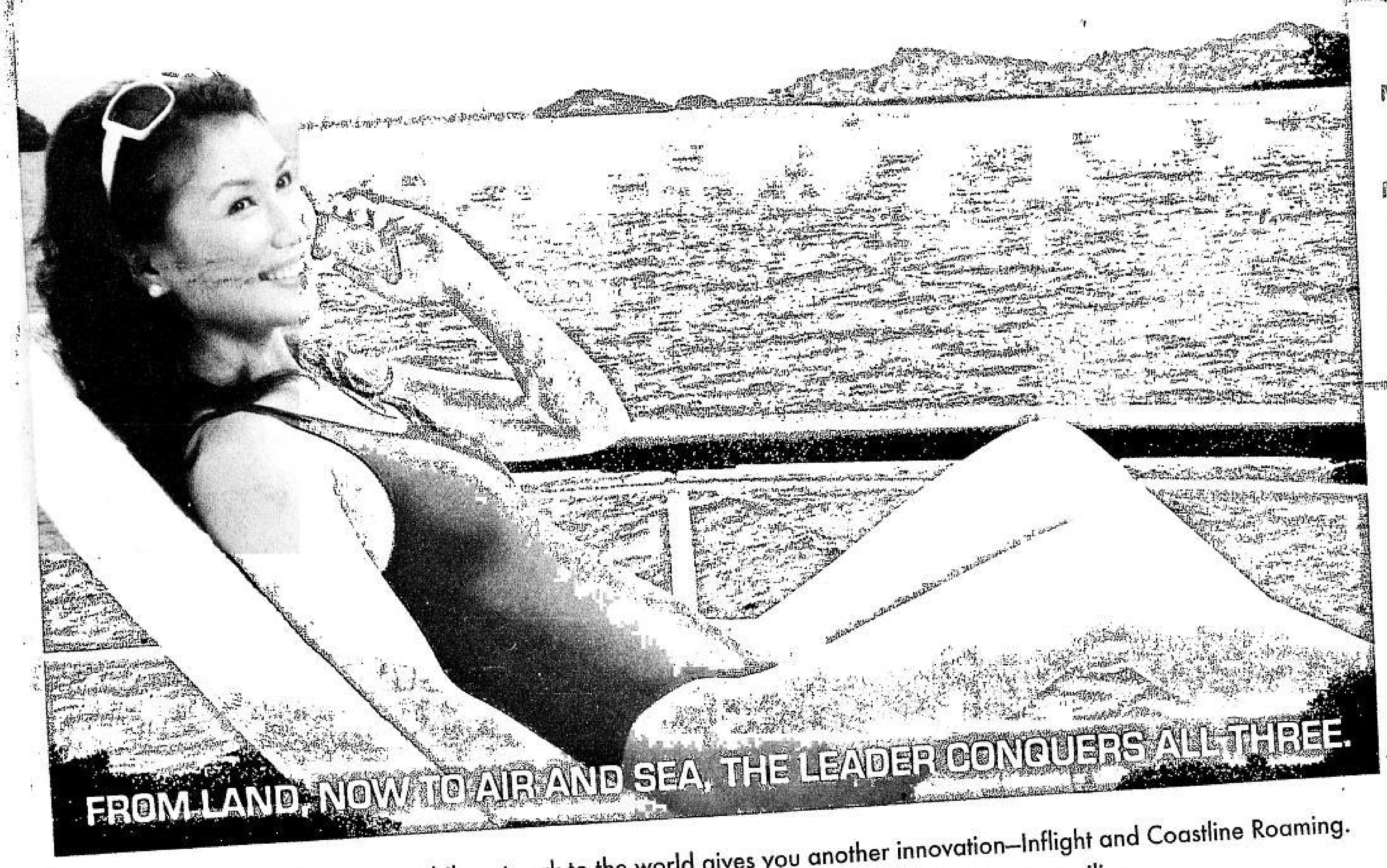
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PBA: Aces battle Realtors /A28

INQUIRER PHOTO/AUGUST DELA CRUZ

SAN Mig Coffee's Glen Balocon drives off Elmer Espiritu of Pharex in yesterday's game.

San Mig makes s'finals

Mail & More forges KO tiff

By Marc Anthony Reyes

SAN MIG COFFEE LEANED ON THE BROAD shoulders of Claiford Arao and Sam Ekwe to finish off Pharex, 77-65, last night and barge into the semifinals of the 2008 PBL V-Go Extreme Energy Cup at the Arena in San Juan City.

GAME TODAY
(*The Arena, San Juan*)
3 p.m.—Mail & More vs Toyota Balintawak

The 6-foot-5 Arao scored 10 of his 11 points to ignite a 16-2 first-half blast that gave San Mig Coffee a 36-31 lead. Then the 6-foot-8 Ekwe took over, scattering 14 of his 20 points in the third quarter to pad the Coffee Kings' edge to 57-49.

With the victory, San Mig arranged a semifinal duel with Harbour Centre starting tomorrow at the Rizal Coliseum.

Earlier, Kiel Misa buried a three-pointer and four free throws in the dying seconds to resuscitate Mail & More's bid with a 69-62 victory over Toyota Balintawak.

The peppery 5-foot-8 guard from Perpetual Help knocked in the pivotal points in the last 15 seconds to frustrate the efforts of the Roadkings, who frantically tried to catch up through Cholo Villanueva.

The Comets thus gained a chance to overhaul the Roadkings' twice-to-beat edge and make the semifinals in a knockout match today also at the Arena.

"There is still no reason to celebrate because our mission is not yet finished," said Mail & More coach Allan Gregorio. "But I'm happy that we matched their intensity and passion and we got the needed breaks late in the game."

The scores:

First Game

MAIL & MORE 69—David 13, Misa 10, Santos 8, Arellano 8, Gregorio 8, Baracael 8, Bravo 8, Bonus 5, Ballesteros 1, Co 0, Masbang 0.

TOYOTA BALINTAWAK 62—Aldave 10, Sta. Maria 10, Faundo 9, Villanueva 8, Jazul 6, Dedicatoria 6, Casio 5, Jaime 4, Sena 2, Guerrero 2, Rodriguez 0.

Quarters: 19-13, 39-39, 52-49, 69-62

Second Game

SAN MIG 77—Ekwe 20, Raneses 13, Bolocon 11, Arao 11, Custodio 9, Escobal 6, Pascual 4, Dela Pena 3, Meno 0, Saldua 0.

PHAREX 65—Alfad 12, Bulawan 11, Allera 10, Oreta 8, Co 8, Espiritu 7, Matias 6, Latoreno 3, Aquino 0, De Guzman 0, Yambao 0.

Quarters: 10-19, 36-31, 57-49, 77-65

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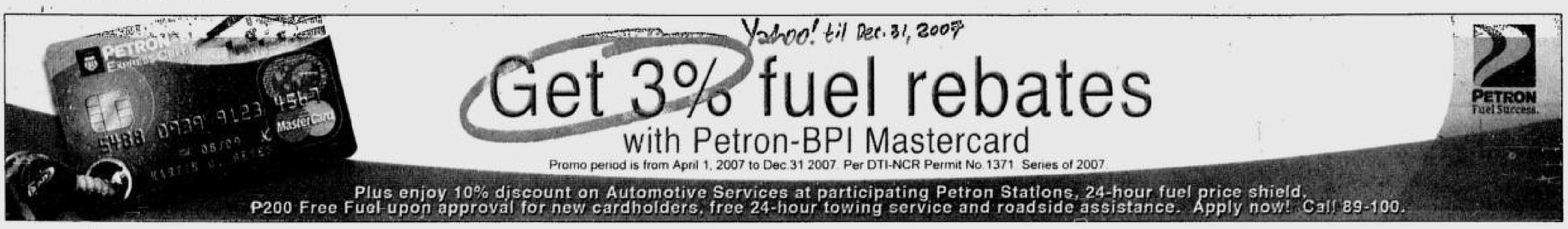
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Aces, Realtors collide; Pals battle Express

THE LAST TIME THEY MET, ALASKA TOOK Sta. Lucia Realty for granted and paid dearly for it.

The Aces will need a 180-degree turn from that approach when they try to get back at the streaking Realtors today in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

"Hopefully, we could turn the tables on them this time," said Alaska coach Tim Cone. "They (Realtors) certainly gained our respect."

With Kelly Williams going on a scoring rampage and the rest of the Realtors connecting from the outside, the Aces found no answer and relied on the futile efforts of Willie Miller during their first meeting, which Sta. Lucia won, 94-88, two weeks ago.

Winning their last three games highlighted by that recent runaway 104-78 victory over Red Bull, the Realtors are back in contention for a quarterfinal spot with their 7-6 record. As it is, they are not even out of the race for an outright semifinal berth just yet.

The top two teams at the end of the 18-game classification round clinch semifinal seats outright while the third- and fourth-ranked teams are bound to secure the automatic quarterfinal slots in the playoffs.

In the other game, the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals aim to stretch their winning run to three against the Air21 Express. *June Navarro*

STANDINGS	W	L
Purefoods	10	3
Alaska	8	5
Red Bull	8	5
Sta. Lucia	7	6
Talk 'N Text	7	6
Ginebra	6	8
Magnolia	7	7
Air21	5	7
Coca-Cola	5	8
Welcoat	3	11

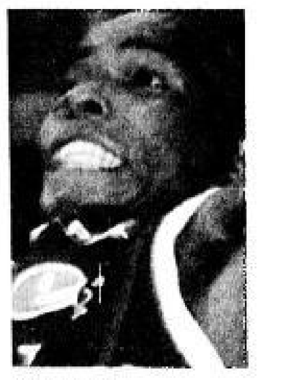
GAMES TODAY
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:50 p.m.—Air21 vs Talk N Text
7:20 p.m.—SLR vs Alaska

RENREN Rituralo of Talk 'N Text tries to find an open man against Ranidel de Ocampo of FedEx during their first meeting this season. The two teams collide again today.

PDI PHOTO

Air21 acquires Espinas; Carey Cardona fined, suspended

By June Navarro



ESPINAS

GABBY ESPINAS BECAME the latest addition to Air21's athletic lineup after acquiring the 6-foot-4 sophomore from Magnolia for one of the three first-round picks of the Express next season.

Air21 coach Bo Perasol said the arrival of Espinas will provide more flexibility in his rotation since he could field in the 2004 NCAA rookie-MVP either at the wings or at the post.

Perasol also said that Wynne Arboleda will be back in harness against Talk 'N Text tonight (*See related story on the left*) after the playmaker missed the Express' recent back-to-back losses due to conjunctivitis.

In another development, Harvey Carey and Mac Cardona were fined P20,000 each on top of suspensions for unsportsmanlike conduct during Talk 'N Text's previous victory over Welcoat.

Cardona was suspended for one game after he hit Hercules Tangkay with a clothesline tackle in the waning minutes of the third quarter. Carey, who pushed Tangkay at the height of the altercation, will sit out the Phone Pals' next two games.

PBA technical chief Perry Martinez said the league imposed the stiffer penalty on Carey for directly involving himself in a fight and rushing to the scene of a melee that he should not have been a part of.

The league deferred its decision on what penalty to impose on Welcoat's Ryan Araña, who committed a flagrant foul on Coca-Cola's Asi Taulava during Sunday's game.

Pacquiao slight favorite over Marquez

PACQUIAO

By Roy Luarca

THE FAVORITE'S TAG HAS BEEN PINNED on Manny Pacquiao, but Juan Manuel Marquez can still snatch it from behind.

That's the situation after odds makers opened shop for the megabuck Pacquiao-Marquez II slated March 15 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

According to John Chavez of Boxing Confidential, the current betting in Las Vegas is Pacquiao at minus 140 and Marquez at plus 110.

This means that a $140 bet on the Filipino superstar will yield just $100 in case of a victory while a $100 wager on the Mexican WBC super featherweight champ will win P110.

This is understandable, according to Chavez, because many boxing pundits believe that Marquez is "no longer the sharp-shooting sniper he was once," despite his unanimous decision victory over countryman Marco Antonio Barrera on March 17.

Pacquiao, who turned 29 on Monday, was even more convincing in repeating over Barrera on Oct. 6, thus setting the stage for the grudge rematch against Marquez.

In their first meeting on May 8, 2004, Pacquiao knocked down Marquez thrice in the first round, but had to settle for a draw after one of the judges committed—and later admitted—a scoring error that would have swung the result in the Filipino's favor.

Finally, through the joint efforts of Bob Arum and Golden Boy Promotion's Oscar De La Hoya, they have been given a chance to find out who really is the better fighter.

One thing is certain though: The betting for Pacquiao-Marquez II won't go the way of the Pacquiao-Barrera rematch, when the odds went as high as 3-1 in favor of the Filipino.

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Cebu, Manila batters begin title showdown

GAMES TODAY (*Rizal Memorial ballpark*)
9 a.m.—Exhibition Game
1 p.m.—Manila vs Cebu (Game 1)

CEBU AND MANILA START THEIR BEST-of-three championship series today, both eager to work behind their returning national team aces in the Baseball Philippines Series 2 at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

The Dolphins will parade RP team pitcher Joseph Orillana, Jonash Ponce and Fulgencio Rances against the Sharks' Charlie Labrador, Nino Tator and Rommel Roja.

The Nationals, however, are still reeling from the loss they suffered at the hands of the Thais in the Southeast Asian Games gold-medal match.

"We will work doubly hard because the level of competition is higher now," said Johel Palanog, team manager of Manila.

The Sharks made short work of the Marikina Shoemakers, 9-3, for the North Division championship last Saturday.

Palanog said the arrival of the RP players from the recent SEAG made the Sharks more formidable.

The Dolphins are coming off a hard-fought win over Dumaguete for the South Division title—an 8-7 decision via a ninth-inning RBI by stringer Tony Olayvar.

"We have always played good games against Manila, so this is going to be an exciting matchup for us," said Cebu assistant manager RJ Manzano.

Cebu lost its two games against Manila in the eliminations. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

MCC chess team tourney slated

A TEAM TOURNAMENT OPEN TO CHESS ASSOCIATIONS, companies, government units and schools fires off on Dec. 29 and 30 at the Metropolitan Chess Club at St. Francis Square, behind SM Megamall, in Mandaluyong City.

Teams of four players each should have an average active rating of no more than 1950. A team can import a master as long as the prescribed rating requirement is observed.

Players without board assignments may compete individually. Team standings will be determined by summing up the final score of their respective top three scorers.

Up for grabs is a cash pot of P40,000 with the champion getting the top prize of P15,000. Deadline for registration is Dec. 27. For inquiries, call 974-7403, 826-8560 or 0916-8521069.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Sun King (7), Ideal Mind (3), Golden Hawk (8), Never Late (6)
Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Mr. Gee (8), Iron Hand (9), Gold Diamond (10), Shifty (1), Old Reliable (3)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Kimagure/Royal Heiress (6), Carmelita (1), Man Power (3), La Perouse (8)
Race 4—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Slim Princess (1), Security Are Us (9), Nice And Easy (6), War Love (4), Touch Of Class (3)
Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Cool N' Sazzy (4), Viva Treasure (7), Instant (2), Areglado (8), Be Faithful (3)
Race 6—(Qrt/Tri)—Fox Trot (2), Kampai (4), Newsmaker (1), Sir Vey (7)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Latin Music (5), God Is Good (4), Bubble Gum (2), Mika's Pride (8), Vhingget (6)
Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Gold Money (2), Imperial Manila (12), American Inggo (9), Real Tough (5), Fancilul (3), Writtenindstars (1)

SPORTSWATCH

Makati derby Round 4 on

EXCITING MATCHES TAKE CENTERSTAGE anew today as the fourth round eliminations of "Pamaskong Salpukan" 6-cock derby resume at the Makati Coliseum.

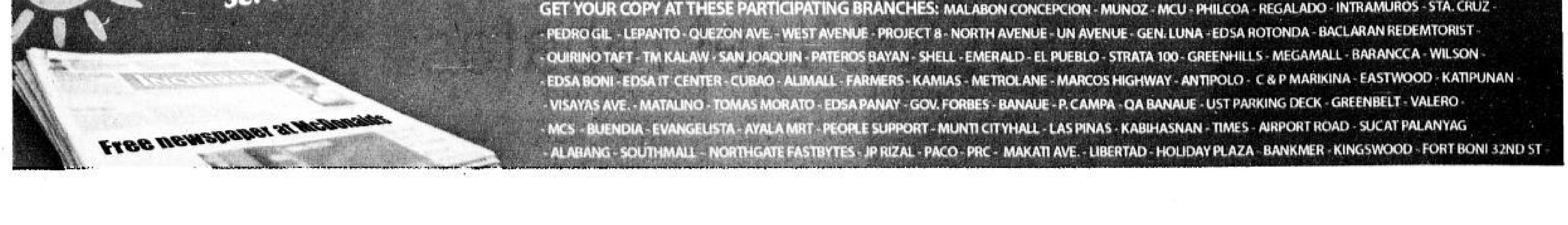
Hosts Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co expect the number of entries—lured by the guaranteed prize of more than P3 million plus a Toyota Innova and passenger jeep—to top last year's 312.

As of yesterday, 246 cockers and breeders have joined the derby. Another set of 80 or so entries will see action on the last day of eliminations on Saturday. The finals will be on Dec. 26 and 29.

'Rambulan' finals get going

THE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND OF "PAMASkong Rambulan" 6-cock derby, a blockbuster event with P3 million at stake, gets under way today at the San Juan Coliseum with more than 100 fights lined up.

After four days of elimination rounds, 23 participants lead the competition with three wins each, including Alfe Soriano, Jingco Brothers (two entries), Joel Fernando, Louie Cua, Magno Lim, Otto Balboa, Datu Puti group, Emil Chua, Mayor Buddy Dunca, Willy Martinez, Sonny Lagon, Danny Teves, Allan Siaco and Rodolfo Pineda.



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La Salle-Ateneo golf duel fires off today

TANPINCO

FERNANDO

LA SALLE IS GUNNING FOR A THIRD straight win but formidable Ateneo has lain a warning trap: The "enemy" is in for a big surprise.

Which side gets the last laugh and the bragging rights after three days of team golf will be known starting today when La Salle and Ateneo collide in their annual Match Play 2007 at Tagaytay Midlands.

"We're strong enough to shoot for a third straight win," said La Salle captain Freddie Mendoza on the eve of the Ryder Cup-style event, a rivalry so intense both schools tapped their best talents to ensure victory.

"Our friends on the other side are in for a big surprise," warned Ateneo skipper Teboy Javier.

Mendoza and Javier were both evasive when asked who they will field against the other side's players in the first round.

Six foursome and as many four-ball matches are scheduled in each of the first two rounds of the three-day event, the pivotal stage both teams want to dominate to gain breathing room going into the crucial singles matches Friday.

The event, organized and hosted by Belle Corp. and Tagaytay Highlands in cooperation with the De La Salle Alumni Association Golf Club and the Ateneo Golf Foundation, officially kicked off last night with the parade of teams and traditional hitting of the ceremonial drive.

After losing in the inaugural staging of the event in 2004 at Sherwood Hills, the Archers took the next two duels at Camp John Hay and at Sherwood.

Tommy Manotoc, Francis Gaston, Miko Alejandro, Justin Tambunting, Jenz Teczon and SEA Games silver medalist Anya Tanpinco banner La Salle's squad along with King Stehmeier, JP Reyes, Marco Olives, Justin Limjap, Miko Yee, Oliver Gan, Sammy Sy, Chucky Hong, Raffy Garcia, Chris Infante, Chepe Dulay, Ronnie Littua, Kim Hong, Yayi Escuadro, Bobby Celestino, Bones Floro, Migs Garcia and Augie Palisoc.

Ateneo pins its hopes on reigning national amateur champion Anthony Fernando, Jeric Hechanova, Iggy Clavecilla, Junjun Plana, Marcel Puyat and Jingy Tuason with support to come from Gab Atienza, Joel Bernaldez, Manoling Chan, Leana Farrales, Bayani Garcia, John Gobing, Katrina Gonzales, Lovelyn Guioguio, Marty Ilagan, Bobby Iñigo, Pepot Iñigo, Jovi Neri, Mikey Ozaeta, Don Padilla, Lino Retuerto, Mark Rivera, Benjie Sarmiento and Yoyong Velez.

Updated results will be posted at pilipinasgolf.com, the official website of INQUIRER Golf and Golf Digest Philippines.

Cavs gun down Bucks on James' milestone

CLEVELAND—LEBRON JAMES BECAME THE youngest player in NBA history to score 9,000 career points in helping the Cleveland Cavaliers edge the Milwaukee Bucks, 104-99, in double overtime on Monday.

The 22-year-old registered 31 points to boost his career total to 9,028, passing the milestone a year-and-a-half younger than Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers.

"It is an accomplishment," James told reporters. "It is the individual hard work that I put in during the summer time. It translates into what I do now on the court during the season.

"It is a credit to myself and to the guys I work out with in the offseason."

Zydrunas Ilgauskas scored the Cavaliers' first six points of the second overtime to seal the win. He finished with 24 points and 11 rebounds.

"We were concentrating so much on LeBron that we forgot about Zydrunas, and he shot the ball well," Bucks center Andrew Bogut said. "None of his buckets really were inside. When he shoots the ball like that, he's tough to stop."

In San Antonio, Texas, Grant Hill scored 22 points and Leandro Barbosa collected 18 as the Phoenix Suns beat San Antonio, 100-95, handing the Spurs their first home loss of the season.

It was the first meeting between the two teams since San Antonio eliminated the Suns in the NBA quarterfinals last season.

Barbosa and Amare Stoudemire combined to score 14 points in the fourth quarter. Stoudemire also finished in double figures with 17 points.

"It was definitely fun to play the last two minutes. It was high intensity, and a playoff atmosphere," Stoudemire said. "And when you get playoff atmosphere game in December, you know it's fun to play."

Tim Duncan nearly had a double-double in the first quarter alone, with 10 points and eight rebounds. His 36 points and 17 rebounds were both season-highs.

"He got going, and we tried to start throwing some different looks at him. He's the best. He's great," Phoenix forward Grant Hill said.

Steve Nash was held scoreless in the first half on zero-for-three shooting. His first field goal came with 8:34 left in the third quarter, and he finished with 10 points and 10 assists.

Without France's Tony Parker in the lineup for the third straight game, the Spurs needed Duncan's effort to even stay close, as the rest of the starters combined to score 33 points. San Antonio is 1-2 without Parker in the lineup.

"Of course we miss Tony Parker. He's one of our best players," Duncan said. "We miss him offensively and for the way he attacks and breaks people down. You never know how having him out there and having those things available to us would have changed things tonight."

In other games, Atlanta tripped Utah, 116-111; Indiana waylaid New York, 119-92; Miami edged Minnesota, 91-87; Golden State defeated Memphis, 125-117; Dallas nipped Orlando, 111-108 and Portland hammered New Orleans, 88-76.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade survived a horrendous shooting night to score 30 points, Udonis Haslem added 18 and Miami finally found a way to win at home.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 15 points and added eight rebounds before fouling out for Miami (7-17), which won for only the third time in 11 home games.

Wade shot 6-for-22, including 10 straight misses in one stretch. But he had 14 points in the final quarter, when Miami needed him most.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Stephen Jackson had 28 points and 12 rebounds, and Monta Ellis added 23 points to help Golden State end a three-game road losing streak.

The Golden State victory overshadowed 32 points from Memphis forward Rudy Gay, the second consecutive game in which he has surpassed 30.

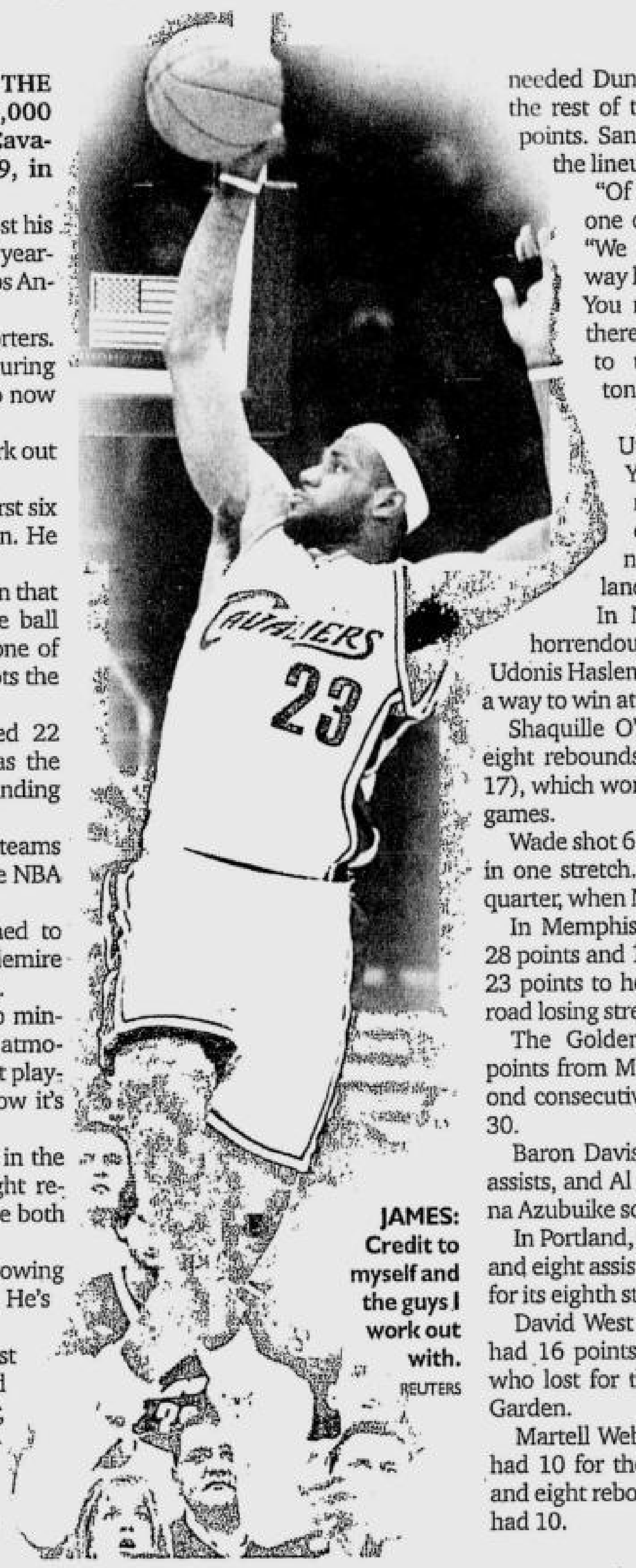
Baron Davis finished with 22 points and eight assists, and Al Harrington added 17 points. Kelenna Azubuike scored 15 for Golden State.

In Portland, Oregon, Brandon Roy had 24 points and eight assists to lead Portland over New Orleans for its eighth straight victory.

David West had 21 points and Tyson Chandler had 16 points and 19 rebounds for the Hornets, who lost for the fourth straight time at the Rose Garden.

Martell Webster had 13 points and Steve Blake had 10 for the Blazers. Chris Paul had 11 points and eight rebounds for New Orleans. Rasual Butler had 10.

Reuters, AFP, AP



JAMES: Credit to myself and the guys I work out with. REUTERS

Dimakiling shares third round lead

Standings after Round 3:
3.0 points—**IM O. Dimakiling (RP)**, GM Z. Azmaiparashvili (GEO); 2.5—IM J. Sadorra (RP), GM Dao T.H. (VIE), IM Grinatah P.D.S. (IND), R.R. Laxman (IND), Shen S. (CHN), Wang L. (CHN); 2.0—**GM M. Paragua (RP), IM J. Gonzales (RP), IM E. Paciencia (RP)**, GM Zhang Z. (SIN), GM Wu S. (SIN), GM S. Chanda (IND), GM S. Megaranto (INA), GM Nguyen A.D. (VIE), WGM Li R. (CHN), Lin C. (CHN), Wan Y. (CHN)

FILIPINO INTERNATIONAL MASter Oliver Dimakiling downed two untitled Chinese in the second and third rounds to share the lead in the 4th Singapore Masters International Open Tournament 2007.

Dimakiling, the Davao City ace who has an Elo rating of 2491, first whipped Lin Chen (2363) late Monday night, then outplayed Wan Yunguo Tuesday morning.

He sealed a fourth-round clash with his co-leader, Georgian Grandmaster Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2606), who trounced woman GM Li Ruofan (2417) of China.

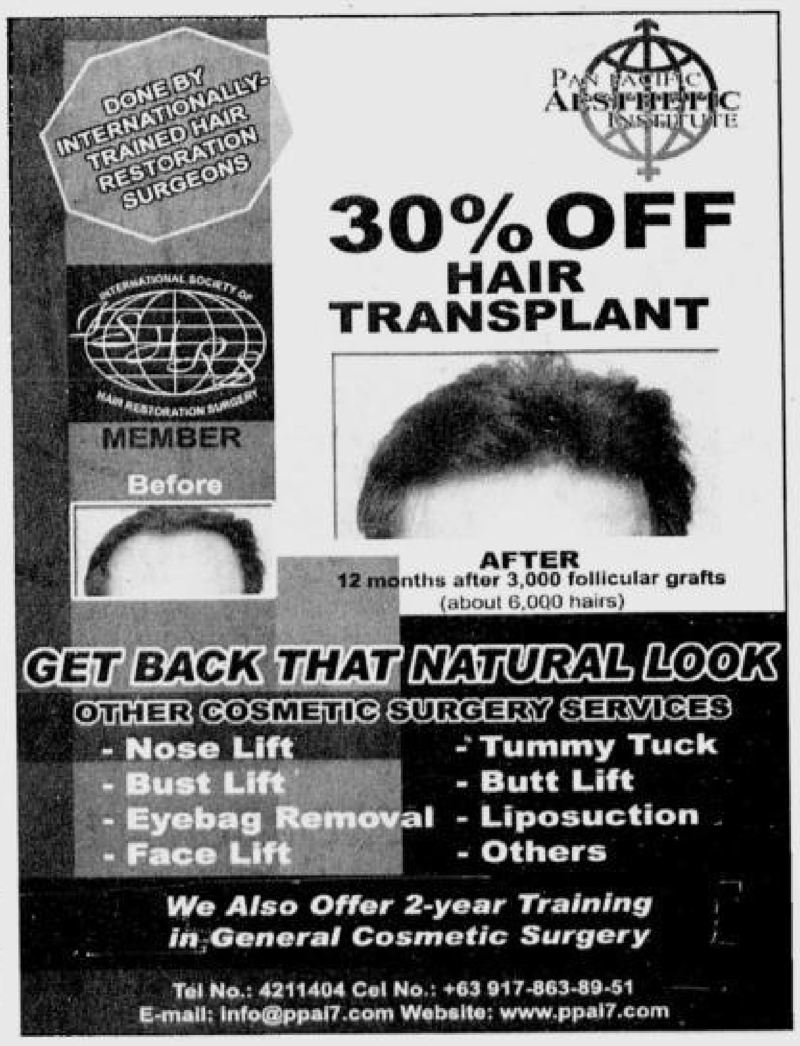
"I hope to do well here and gain a possible GM norm," Dimakiling, winner over Hong Kong WGM Anya Korke (2210) in the opening round Monday, said in a text message.

Azmaiparashvili also thwarted Filipino IM Enrique Paciencia, who took the scalp of the third-seeded Indian GM Chanda Sandipan (2593) in the second round.

GM Mark Paragua bowed to Wan in the second round and was stuck at 2 points in a tie with 10 others, including compatriots Paciencia and IM Jason Gonzales.

New IM Julio Sadorra beat WIM Irine Kharisma Sukandar of Indonesia and FM Graham Chua of Singapore to lead the 2.5 pointers.

Paragua demolished WGM Korke in the third round. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*



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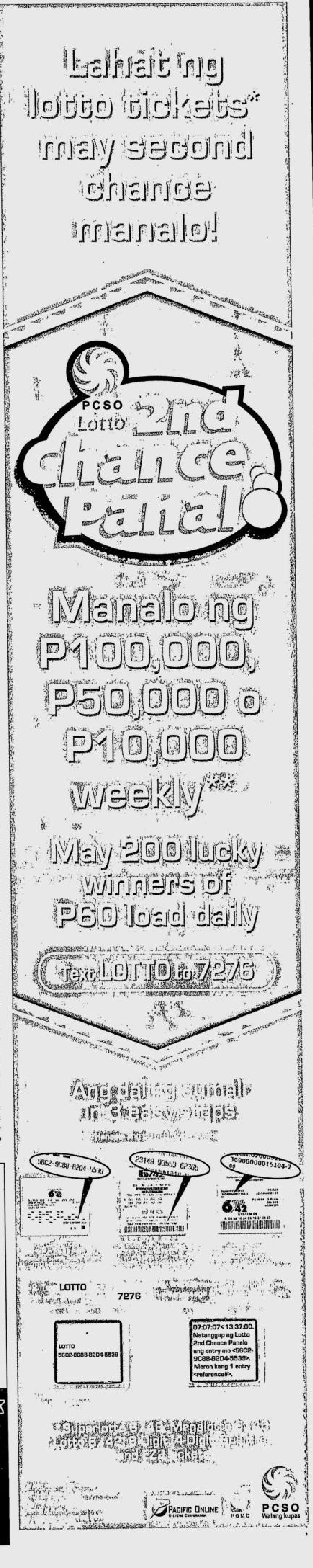

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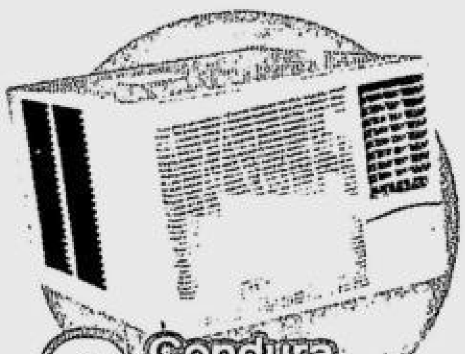

3 Condura 1.5HP Aircon winners

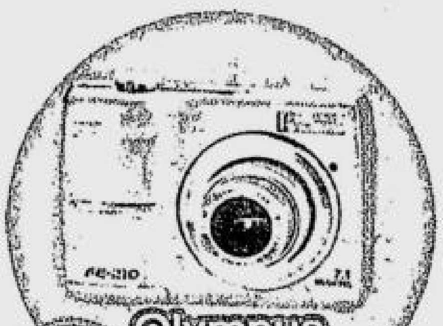
4 Condura 8 cu ft. Refrigerator winners

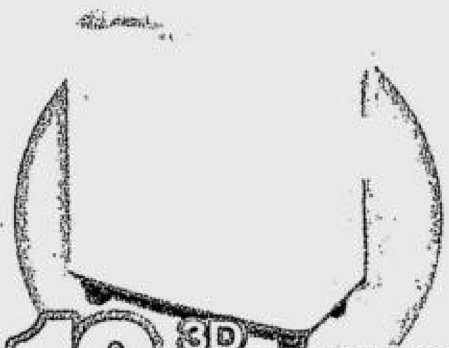
5 Ipod Touch 8GB winners

6 Toshiba Home Theater System winners

7 Nokia N70 2MP winners

8 Symphony Air Cooler winners


9 Olympus FE-210 7.1 MP winners


10 3D Washing Machine winners

11 Toshiba DVD Player winners

12 Ipod Shuffle 1GB winners

BEST VALUES

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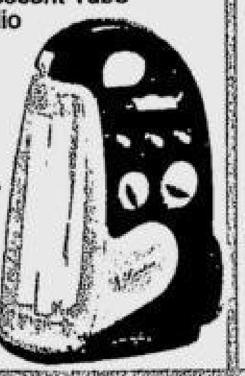
P750

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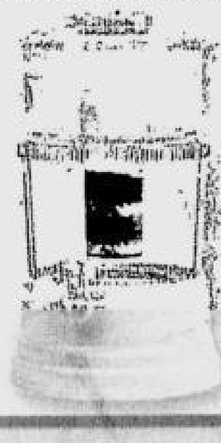
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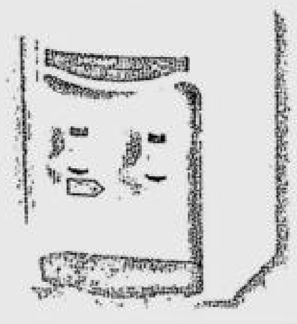
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See Poster Mechanics for Details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5410, Series of 2007

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Grid concessionaire told to retain composition /B8

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Gov't posts record budget surplus of ₱54.1B

₱90B from privatization covers collection shortfall

TEVES

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT posted its highest ever budget surplus of P54.1 billion in November, aided by revenues generated from the sale of a big-ticket power asset.

This brought the government's budget position for the first 11 months of the year to a surplus of P12.6 billion—a huge swing from a deficit of P58.3 billion recorded in the same period last year.

"There is a fighting chance that we may end up with a balanced budget this year," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said yesterday.

Should this happen, the Philippines would be a year ahead of its target of wiping out the budget deficit. The government originally meant to balance the budget by 2008, or after 10 years of being in the red.

For this year, the government was supposed to reduce the deficit to P63 billion from last year's P64.8 billion.

An overperformance in this year's fiscal target was expected largely because

GOV'T/ B7

'Pocket open skies' pushed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS Council yesterday urged local airlines to support a proposed executive order that provides for "pocket open skies," saying this would benefit growth since it would apply only to the Clark airport.

Meneleo J. Carlos Jr., the NCC's champion for a seamless infrastructure network, said in an interview that the government-private sector body was ready with its proposed EO 500B, which is expected to boost in-bound budget tourism, which would have a domino effect on the domestic sector.

Carlos explained that as proposed, EO 500B would offer limited air rights to foreign carriers, namely the third and fourth freedoms of the air—that right to carry passengers from one's country to another and the right to bring them in from one country to one's own.

"These would be for six months and, if there are no serious (contrary developments), the fifth freedom may be implemented but only at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport," he said.

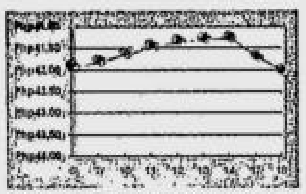
Carlos explained that the fifth freedom—also referred to in the aviation industry as "connecting flight"—meant full open skies as this allows airlines to carry passengers from one's country to another, and onward to a third.

"The original EO 500 provided the fifth freedom and we have seen its benefits," he said. "Unfortunately this was rescinded through EO 500A."

POCKET/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

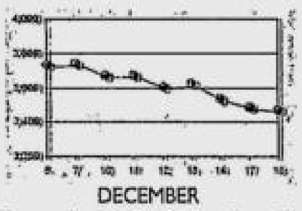
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱41.98 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 18, 2007

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



DECEMBER

(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks down on US worries

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.5-PERCENT lower yesterday as encouraging domestic economic news failed to fully dispel lingering worries over the faltering US economy, dealers said.

The composite index ended down 18.61 points to 3,470.21 after falling by up to 2.1 percent earlier in the day.

The broader all-share index fell 10.82 points to 2,136.18.

There were 66 decliners and 41 advancers, while 59 were unchanged.

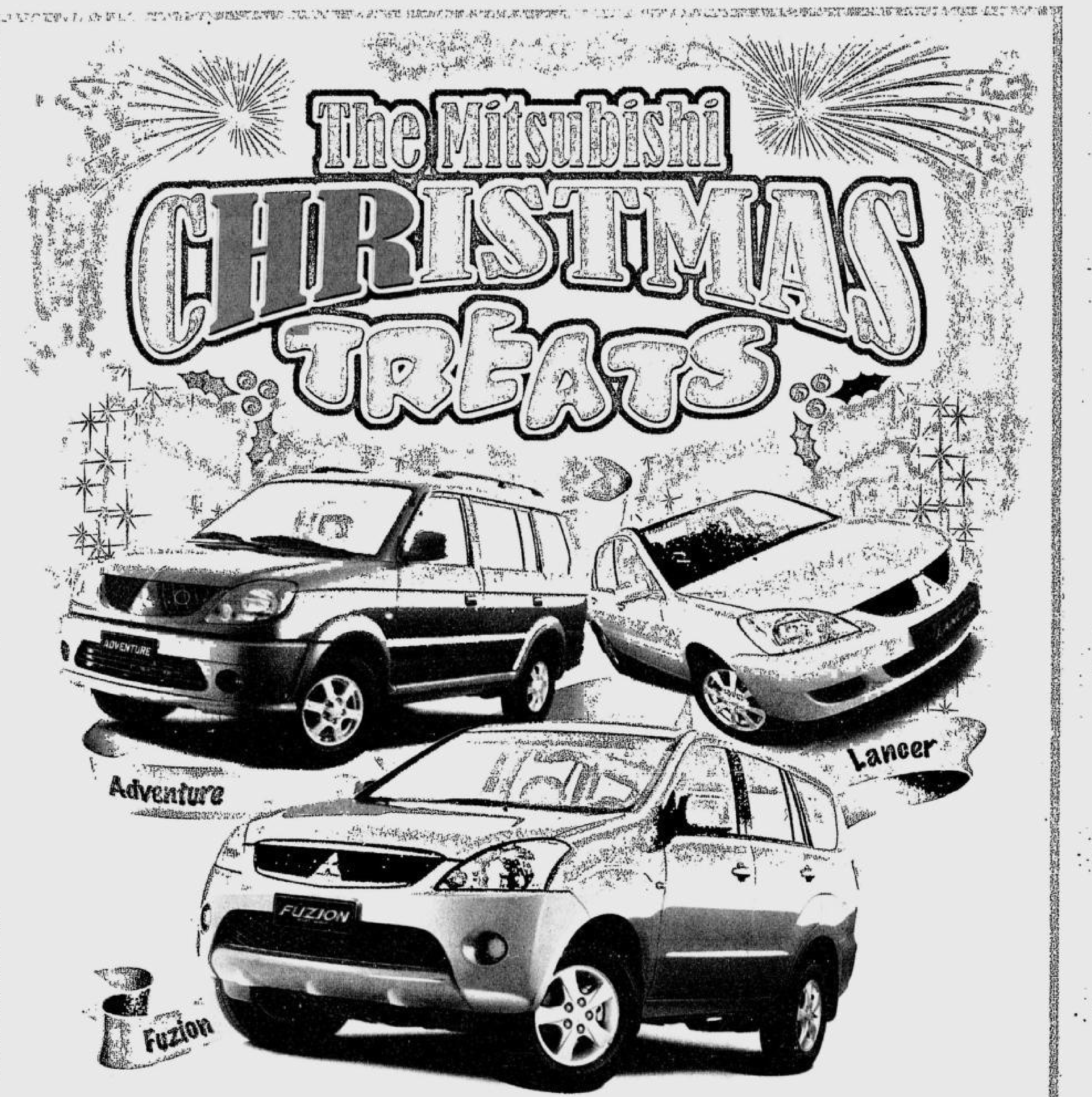
A total of 2.1 billion shares valued at P5.3 billion changed hands.

"We may see a technical rebound tomorrow and some window-dressing before the holidays, but sentiment will remain negative in the near term given worries about stagflation in the US and a slowdown in Philippine economic growth next year," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities.

The selloff in the US markets continued Monday despite a Federal Reserve move to offer $20 billion in 28-day credit to commercial banks to encourage them to borrow from the Fed and boost lending to businesses and consumers.

"Wall Street is looking quite weak as it wrestles with inflation and recession is-

STOCKS/ B2



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Fuzion GLS Sport	1,150,000	130,000	87,657	59,995	47,837	34,090	27,281	23,485

Model	SRP	DP	12	18	24	36	48	60	72
Lancer 1.6 GLX M/T	695,000	85,000	53,494	36,613	29,186	20,799	16,644	14,328	12,903
Lancer 1.6 GLS CVT	768,000	90,000	58,539	40,066	31,947	22,766	18,219	15,684	14,124

Model	SRP	DP	12	18	24	36	48	60	72
Adventure GLX - Diesel	773,000	70,000	58,740	40,204	32,059	22,847	18,283	15,739	14,174
Adventure GLS Sport - Diesel	840,000	70,000	64,115	43,882	34,989	24,934	19,954	17,177	15,469
Adventure Super Sport - Diesel	883,000	120,000	67,520	46,213	36,845	26,257	21,012	18,088	16,289
Adventure GLS Sport Gas A/T	893,000	120,000	68,414	46,825	37,331	26,603	21,289	18,327	16,504

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Fil-Estate Land rights offering gets PSE nod

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FIL-ESTATE LAND INC. HAS SECURED the consent of the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) to raise P577 million through a stock rights offer.

In a disclosure, Fil-Estate Land said the PSE issued a notice of approval dated Dec. 14 approving the company's stock rights offer.

The offering entitles shareholders on record as of Jan. 10, 2008, to buy one share for every 2.51 shares they own at an exercise price of P1 each. The offer period will be from Jan. 25 to Feb. 1.

Fil-Estate Land corporate secretary Gilbert Reyes said the funds to be raised from the company's stock rights offer next year would fund projects in Metro Manila and hotel-resort villas in Boracay.

Reyes also disclosed that the board of the company approved a memorandum of agreement that will be entered into between Camp John Hay Development Corp., real-estate developer Fil-Estate Urban Development Corp. and Fil-Estate Land for the completion of the first phase of the Camp John Hay Suites and Forest Cabins in Baguio City.

Phase 1 of Camp John Hay Suites is a condominium-hotel estimated to have 130 to 140 rooms while the Forest Cabins are duplex units.

Fil-Estate Land has raised funds—in the form of loans and equity—from the Lim Asia Group of Hong Kong to fund initial phases of its projects such as the Cathedral Heights condominium in New Manila, Quezon City; the 18-story Sto. Domingo Tower in Quezon City; Boracay Resort Villas; a condotel at the Camp John Hay Suites and Camp John Hay Forest Cabins; Twin Lakes; Sta. Barbara in Iloilo; Manila Southwoods; a condominium hotel project dubbed Capitol Plaza in Quezon City; Harbor Town; a golf, resort and subdivision community called New Port Hills in Batangas, and Forest Hills, a residential community in Antipolo.

Cebu Pacific buys more aircraft

By Riza T. Olchondra

CEBU PACIFIC HAS MADE FRESH orders for four turbo-prop ATR 72-500 aircraft to be used for small airports, bringing its total firm orders to 10 aircraft worth more than $178 million.

"From our current fleet of 15 Airbus aircraft, we could have a fleet of up to 50 aircraft composed of 32 Airbus and 18 ATRs by the end of 2012 if all (order) options are converted into firm orders," airline president Lance Gokongwei said in a statement yesterday.

The additional aircraft will allow the airline to serve more cities whose runways are too short for its Airbus fleet, particularly Caticlan, Aklan, which serves the Boracay tourist destination.

Areas with smaller airports will likely experience a business boom as the 72-seat ATRs bring in more tourists and businessmen, Gokongwei said. The Caticlan service will start on Feb. 29, 2008, using Cebu Pacific's first ATR.

The Philippines has 75 airports, of which only 25 can accommodate Cebu's bigger Airbus fleet.

In May this year, Cebu Pacific announced its acquisition of up to 14 ATR aircraft consisting of six firm orders and eight options. This is on top of the up to 20 Airbus jets worth $1.3 billion it announced last year.

The turboprop aircraft were made by Toulouse, France-based regional aircraft manufacturer Avions de Transport Regional (ATR). ATR is the world leader in the 50- to 74-seat turboprop market.

Cebu Pacific will take delivery of the first six ATRs in 2008 and four in 2009. The company will also take delivery of four Airbus A320 aircraft in 2008, bringing its fleet to 25 by the end of 2008.

'Pocket open skies' pushed

From page B1

Carlos said such "pocket open skies" would be a boon for overseas Filipino workers who could travel back home more often through the budget airlines.

He added that the domestic hotel and airline industries would get more business in accommodating more tourists and ferrying them from Clark to their final destinations like Boracay and other tourist favorites.

"We have seen this with Asian Spirit, which used to bring passengers from Clark to Boracay but, with growth of its business, now flies direct between Korea and Boracay," Carlos said. "So I don't see why (the proposed order) should be objectionable to bigger domestic players."

He added that encouraging budget airlines to operate in the country would free up more spending money that travelers would otherwise spend on air fare.

"With a budget of $1,000 without open skies, (low-cost) travelers spend $500 on air fare and $500 on tourism," Carlos said.

"With open skies, the traveler would only spend $200 for air fare and increase pocket money to $800 that our economy would absorb," he added.

Carlos said the NCC was expected to present to Malacañang the proposed EO 500B soon, after which everything would be in the hands of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

CURRENCIES

December 18, 2007

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.694396	1.000000	41.5310
Japan	Yen	0.006148	0.008854	0.3677
United Kingdom	Pound	1.404069	2.022000	83.9757
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.089055	0.128248	5.3263
Switzerland	Franc	0.604296	0.870246	36.1422
Canada	Dollar	0.690255	0.994036	41.2833
Singapore	Dollar	0.475386	0.684603	28.4322
Australia	Dollar	0.594823	0.856604	35.5756
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.852909	2.668374	110.8202
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.185168	0.266660	11.0747
Brunei	Dollar	0.473764	0.682268	28.3353
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000074	0.000106	0.0044
Thailand	Baht	0.022932	0.033025	1.3716
UAE	Dirham	0.189080	0.272294	11.3086
EU	Euro	1.000000	1.440100	59.8088
Korea	Won	0.000744	0.001071	0.0445
China	Yuan**	0.093998	0.135367	5.6219
Denmark	Kroner	0.134038	0.193028	8.0166
India	Rupee	0.017571	0.025304	1.0509
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.207965	0.299491	12.4382
New Zealand	Dollar	0.523362	0.753693	31.3016
Sweden	Kroner	0.105826	0.152400	6.3293
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.021391	0.030805	1.2794

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY time—Dec. 17, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian time closing rate as of Dec. 17, 2007

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Stocks ...

From page B1

sues. Unfortunately, this has led to investors ignoring favorable economic developments in the Philippines," said Francisco Liboro of PCCI Securities.

Early in the day, the government reported that the jobless rate fell to 6.3 percent in October from 7.8 percent in July, with nearly half of the work force employed by the booming services sector.

Shortly before the market closed, the government said it would likely end 2007 with a fiscal position that is much stronger than envisioned previously, having recorded a hefty budget surplus of P54.1 billion in November. *(See story on Page B1.)*

However, a sharp weakening in the US economy may further hurt Philippine exports and even trim remittances of Filipinos working overseas, many of them based in the United States. *AFP*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 18, 2007)

52-WKS HIGH	52-WKS LOW	STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
		BANKS					
73	44	Banco de Oro-EPCI Inc.	58	58	56.5	57.5	908,500
73.5	53	Bank of the Philippine Islands	59	59	57	57.5	6,112,500
748	544	China Banking Corp.	655	655	650	650	5,210
23.5	14	Citystate Savings Bank	23	23	23	23	300
0.63	0.36	Export and Industry Bank,Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	510,000
75.5	47.5	Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company	51.5	53	50.5	52.5	5,661,400
65.5	39	Philippine National Bank	48	48	47	47	269,500
68	47	Philippine Savings Bank	59.5	60	59	59	2,500
39.57	20.43	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	23.75	24	23.25	24	1,023,700
90	65	Security Bank Corp.	75.5	76	75.5	75.5	219,500
66	42	Union Bank of the Philippines	43.5	43.5	42.5	43	193,300
		OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
5.6	1.92	ATR KimEng Financial Corp.	4	4	4	4	10,000
2.22	0.6	Bankard Inc.	1.86	1.9	1.84	1.9	268,000
16.25	4.6	CitisecOnline.com Inc.	11	11	10.5	10.75	775,400
42.5	29	First Metro Investment Corp.	42.5	42.5	42.5	42.5	2,000
5.9	4.6	I-Remit Inc.	4.65	4.7	4.6	4.7	375,000
6.8	1.74	Makati Finance Corp.	6.3	6.8	6	6	33,000
1,970.00	1,580.00	Manulife Financial Corp.	1,615.00	1,615.00	1,615.00	1,615.00	90
5	2.7	National Reinsurance Corp. of the Phils.	3.1	3.2	3.05	3.2	855,000
3.1	1.32	PCI Leasing and Finance Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	50,000
1,390.00	270	The Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.	1,000.00	1,000.00	995	1,000.00	40,220
2,500.00	1,970.00	Sun Life Financial Inc.	2,255.00	2,265.00	2,255.00	2,265.00	2,360
1.94	1.3	Vantage Corp	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.68	2,080,000
		ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
6.2	3.8	Aboitiz Power Corp.	5	5.2	4.95	5	718,000
70.5	49	First Gen Corp.	60.5	60.5	59	59.5	156,900
92	58	First Phil. Holdings Corp.	70	70.5	69.5	70	732,200
18.5	8.8	Manila Water Company Inc.	17.5	18.5	17.5	18.5	16,244,500
105.45	48.16	Manila Electric Company	76	79.5	75	78.5	1,308,500
7.8	4.3	PNOC Energy Development Corp.	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	21,731,000
7.4	3.95	Petron Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.5	5.6	24,485,000
14.75	6.4	Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc.	6.6	7	6.6	7	120,000
2.04	0.94	Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Dev't Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.18	1.22	9,193,000
		FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
6.3	3.4	Alaska Milk Corp.	4.85	4.9	4.85	4.9	110,000
2.32	1.46	Alliance Tuna International Inc.	1.56	1.56	1.46	1.48	562,000
61	40.5	Jollibee Foods Corp.	48	48	47	47.5	784,200
9.1	6	Pancake House Inc.	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.7	1,419,000
0.98	0.5	RFM Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	10,000
3.1	2.06	Roxas Holdings	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8	154,000
80	42.5	San Miguel Corp. A	59	59.5	59	59	18,800
88	43	San Miguel Corp. B	59.5	59.5	59	59.5	1,298,200
20.75	13.5	Universal Robina Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.75	13.75	3,400,500
0.55	0.24	Vitarich Corp.	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.37	70,000
		CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
6.1	2.65	EEI Corp.	4	4	4	4	140,000
9.2	4.95	Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.5	7.8	7.5	7.8	524,000
2	0.81	Southeast Asia Cement Holdings Inc.	0.95	0.98	0.94	0.98	1,660,000
23	2.12	TKC Steel Corp.	8.7	9.1	8.7	9	1,230,000
		CHEMICALS					
6.3	3.75	Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4	4.05	4	4	625,000
		DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
0.75	0.185	Picop Resources Inc.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	2,600,000
9	6.2	Splash Corp.	8	8.4	7.7	8.3	3,565,000
		HOLDING FIRMS					
39	18.75	ABS-CBN Hldg Corp. - Phil. Deposit Receipts	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	6,000
3.9	2.7	A. Soriano Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	199,000
0.185	0.0575	AJO.net Holdings Inc.	0.115	0.12	0.11	0.12	28,270,000
1.28	0.3	APC Group Inc.	0.57	0.6	0.57	0.58	2,570,000
3.65	1.5	ATN Holdings Inc. A	2.42	2.48	2.4	2.46	114,000
0.0182	0.0076	Abacus Cons. Res. and Hold'gs Inc. A	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.01	417,000,000
9.7	5.8	Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc.	6.9	7	6.7	6.8	6,346,000
0.021	0.01	Alcorn Gold Resources Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	26,500,000
7.3	3.5	Alliance Global Group Inc.	5.1	5.2	5	5.1	10,306,000
1.38	0.61	Alsons Consolidated Resources Inc.	0.8	0.81	0.8	0.81	110,000
1.5	0.38	Asia Amalgamated Holdings Corp.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	200,000
2.9	1.04	Anglo-Philippine Holdings Corp.	2.3	2.36	2.3	2.32	1,712,000
8	0.8	Aries Prime Resources Inc.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2,000
16	4.5	Atok-Big Wedge Company Inc. A	9	9	9	9	1,000
645	400	Ayala Corp.	510	510	485	500	612,090
5.8	2.14	Benpres Holdings Corp.	3.8	4.15	3.8	4.1	5,071,000
12	5.6	DMCI Holdings Inc.	9.3	9.3	9.1	9.1	986,000
8	3.5	Filinvest Development Corp.	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.8	68,000
3.55	1.76	House of Investments Inc.	2	2	2	2	100,000
14.5	8.9	JG Summit Holdings Inc.	9.8	9.9	9.8	9.9	623,000
5.9	0.61	Jolliville Holdings Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	50,000
28	1.42	Lodestar Investment Hldgs Corp.	16	17.5	15.25	16.75	12,900
11.5	1.5	Minerales Industrias Corp.	6.1	6.4	6	6.3	2,950,000
8.5	3	PAL Holdings Inc.	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	10,000
0.28	0.016	Pacifica Inc. A	0.21	0.22	0.205	0.215	119,940,000
0.75	0.19	Prime Orion Philippines Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	720,000
2.1	1.3	Republic Glass Holdings Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	100,000
452.5	285.32	SM Investments Corp.	340	340	332.5	335	319,270
0.73	0.15	Sinophil Corp.	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.33	2,210,000
1.06	0.61	Solid Group Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	100,000
2	0.92	South China Resources Inc.	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	50,000
0.75	0.12	Wellex Industries Inc.	0.28	0.3	0.28	0.3	1,190,000
		PROPERTY					
2.38	1	A Brown Company Inc.	1.6	1.98	1.74	1.94	6,756,000
8.9	5	Anchor Land Holdings Inc.	7	7.2	7	7.2	35,000
19.25	12.08	Ayala Land Inc.	13.5	14.25	13.5	14.25	11,716,800
1.88	1	Belle Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.2	356,000
4.7	3.15	Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.55	3.55	3.55	3.55	8,000
0.86	0.4	Crown Equities Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59	50,000
0.83	0.24	Cyber Bay Corp.	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.37	7,150,000
1.05	0.56	Empire East Land Holdings Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.8	15,730,000
6.9	1.1	Eton Properties Philippines Inc.	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.8	80,000
0.47	0.0575	Ever Gotesco Res. and Hold'gs Inc.	0.21	0.225	0.21	0.225	2,840,000
1.48	0.61	Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.93	0.95	0.93	0.94	3,140,000
2.44	1.22	Filinvest Land Inc.	1.24	1.3	1.22	1.3	123,415,000
1.12	0.31	MRC Allied Industries Inc.	0.54	0.56	0.54	0.56	560,000
4.6	2.24	Megaworld Corp.	3.65	3.8	3.55	3.8	63,589,000
6.4	1.5	Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	4.1	4.1	4	4	44,000
0.86	0.32	Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.43	0.48	0.43	0.47	2,720,000
23	14.5	Robinson Land Corp.	15.25	15.75	14.75	15.5	1,936,600
5.9	2.05	SM Development Corp.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.75	2,248,000
13.5	7.92	SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10.25	10.5	10	10.5	4,724,500
4.5	0.38	Sta. Lucia Land Inc.	1.68	1.78	1.68	1.78	323,000
1.34	0.46	Suntrust Home Developers Inc.	0.6	0.61	0.6	0.61	420,000
0.49	0.0975	Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.23	400,000
7.5	3.65	Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.7	7,382,000
		MEDIA					
38.5	18.75	ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	33	33	33	33	10,500
12	7.6	GMA Holdings Inc.	8	8.2	7.7	8.1	868,000
11.75	7.5	GMA Network Inc.	7.6	7.8	7.5	7.8	2,086,000
		TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
2.12	1.1	Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc.	1.5	1.58	1.46	1.56	10,820,000
1,750.00	1,180.00	Globe Telecom Inc.	1,460.00	1,460.00	1,445.00	1,460.00	83,950
3,285.00	2,250.00	Phil. Long Distance Telephone Co.	2,970.00	3,000.00	2,970.00	3,000.00	518,810
8.1	5.5	Pilipino Telephone Corp.	6.9	7	6.8	7	2,427,000
		INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
0.39	0.17	Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.185	0.19	8,750,000
15.75	2.1	Diversified Financial Network Inc.	15	15.5	14.75	15.25	861,000
11.5	3.55	IPVG Corp.	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.3	142,000
0.065	0.027	ISM Communications Corp.	0.036	0.037	0.036	0.037	21,900,000
6	1.62	Information Capital Tech. Ventures Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	30,000
2.9	1.1	Ionics Inc.	1.52	1.52	1.5	1.5	184,000
0.32	0.05	Island Information and Technology Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18	1,420,000
2.26	1.1	Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.94	2	1.92	1.98	1,940,000
0.0725	0.03	Philweb Corp.	0.045	0.046	0.044	0.046	31,400,000
5.1	1.64	Transpacific Broadband Group Int'l. Inc.	2.34	2.4	2.34	2.34	1,494,000
		TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
2.14	1.18	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.2	224,000
49	19	Int'l Container Terminal Services Inc.	43	44	43	44	1,484,600
2.3	0.93	Keppel Philippines Marine Inc.	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.2	29,640,000
		HOTEL & LEISURE					
4.25	1.8	Leisure and Resorts World Corp.	2.4	2.46	2.34	2.46	240,000
6	2.16	Manila Jockey Club Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.2	175,000
4.55	2.9	Philippine Racing Club Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	2,000
1.52	0.33	Premiere Entertainment Productions Inc.	1.24	1.26	1.22	1.24	1,203,000
1.2	0.55	Waterfront Philippines Inc.	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83	10,000
		EDUCATION					
9.4	7.2	Centro Escolar University	8.6	8.7	8.6	8.7	6,000
3.7	2.6	iPeople Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	190,200
		DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
43	6.6	JTH Davies Holdings Inc.	29	29	28.5	29	12,700
6	2.04	Macroasia Corp.	4.6	4.6	4.55	4.6	275,000
17.25	9.8	Pacific Online Systems Corp.	10.75	10.75	10	10.5	366,500
30	5.3	Paxys Inc.	5.7	5.7	5.3	5.4	1,972,000
472.5	350	eTelecare Global Solutions Inc.	360	360	350	350	350
		MINING					
0.017	0.0085	Abra Mining and Industrial Corp.	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.01	151,000,000
7.2	3.6	Apex Mining Company Inc. A	5.9	6	5.8	6	251,000
7.4	3.85	Apex Mining Company Inc. B	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	70,000
21.25	8.1	Atlas Cons. Mining and Dev't Corp.	12.75	13.5	12.5	13.5	1,188,500
20.75	8.9	Benguet Corp. A	19	19.25	19	19.25	234,800
12.75	2.1	Dizon Copper Silver Mines Inc.	8.6	8.9	8.5	8.9	227,000
3.1	0.6	GEOGRACE Resources Philippines Inc.	1.7	1.86	1.68	1.84	63,245,000
0.56	0.18	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. A	0.46	0.48	0.45	0.48	42,980,000
0.61	0.22	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. B	0.48	0.5	0.48	0.5	26,370,000
0.038	0.017	Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.028	0.026	0.028	66,100,000
0.041	0.02	Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	16,000,000
30	3.6	NiHAO Minerals Resources Int'l Inc.	18.25	19.25	18	19	1,582,200
0.021	0.0096	Omico Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.012	0.014	441,600,000
0.015	0.007	Omico Corp. - Warrants	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	17,000,000
11.25	3.5	Philex Mining Corp.	9.4	9.5	9.2	9.5	5,922,000
49.5	14.75	Semirara Mining Corp.	43	43.5	43	43	27,300
1.36	0.65	United Paragon Mining Corp.	0.72	0.72	0.7	0.7	750,000
1.8	0.99	Vulcan Industrial and Mining Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	656,000
		OIL					
0.58	0.27	Basic Energy Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.3	10,810,000
0.029	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. A	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.023	39,500,000
0.03	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. B	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	500,000
13.75	9	Petroenergy Resources Corp.	9.8	9.8	9.7	9.8	142,000
0.032	0.0098	The Philodrill Corp.	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.028	73,800,000

AVERAGES			VOLUME	VALUE
Financial	836.78 DOWN	9.31	19,364,480	826,062,275.00
Industrial	4,362.89 DOWN	43.63	92,879,800	977,825,580.00
Holding Firms	1,880.52 DOWN	33.65	628,442,260	602,964,750.00
Property	1,468.59 UP	11.15	255,623,900	719,195,715.00
Service	1,800.68 UP	8.59	119,838,410	1,899,862,235.00
Mining & Oil	8,152.00 UP	57.36	942,961,100	271,797,035.00
All Shares Index	2,136.18 DOWN	10.82		
PSEi	3,470.21 DOWN	18.61		
	GRAND TOTALS		2,059,109,950	5,297,707,590.00

COMPILED BY SCHATZI QUODALA, INQUIRER RESEARCH

SOURCE: TECHNISTOCK PSE

PRICE MONITORING

Costs of goods remain stable in run-up to holidays

By Ronnel W. Domingo and Amy R. Remo

CHRISTMAS IS LESS THAN A week away, yet prices of goods remain stable, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

"Contrary to speculations, we have not seen any major upward movement in prices," Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said.

Citing the latest monitoring reports from the DTI and the Department of Agriculture, Favila said that prices of basic goods such as canned meat, sardines, milk, coffee, soap and detergents have remained at levels seen the previous month.

The trade chief said that, as for agricultural goods, prices of pork liempo and chicken have remained at P140 and P120, respectively.

Prices of refined and brown sugar went down by P2 a kilo and those of rice by P1.

Agriculture officials have assured the public that the spike of 3 to 10 percent in retail prices normally takes place during the Christmas season as a result of higher consumer demand. After the holidays, the prices will then revert to previous levels.

They likewise assured the public that there is ample supply of agricultural produce, particularly that of chicken, this Christmas.

"We have sufficient supply of chicken for this month so consumers have no reason to worry about prices going beyond their normal holiday level," Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said. "It is normal for prices to go up slightly at this time given the seasonal increase in consumer demand."

He said chicken supply was adequate for the rest of the month as frozen inventories are currently pegged at seven million kilos.

"Such inventories are enough to meet the average consumer demand of 22 million kilos in the metropolis," he added.

Tracing the market price pattern since 2005, Yap noted that market rates of chicken normally go up by as much as 10 percent during the season.

Monitoring teams deployed by the DA showed that dressed chicken was selling for an average of P115 to P120 per kilo in Metro Manila markets during the weekend.

Already, Yap had secured commitments from industry

COSTS/B7

GSIS: Punish the villain, not the victim

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

A YOUNG MAN (LET US CALL him Jerry), fresh out of college, enters government service. On the day his employment status becomes permanent, he is compulsorily insured by the Government Service Insurance System.

Under the Endowment at 65 policy, Jerry pays a level annual premium until age 65. If he dies before 65, his beneficiary receives the full sum insured less any outstanding loans. If he reaches 65, he can choose to receive a monthly pension.

Every payday, Jerry's share of the premium is deducted from his salary. He has no say about the insurance transaction. It is required by law.

Anyway, he welcomes the deduction. It is only about 40 percent of total premium. The balance of about 60 percent is a fringe benefit paid by his employer. It is also the duty of the employer to remit everything to GSIS.

The law guarantees that the money Jerry and his employer pays to GSIS, including the earnings thereon, will be returned in the form of death, disability and pension benefits, according to strict actuarial equations specified in the law.

After 45 years of faithful and efficient service to the government, Jerry files for retirement. By God's grace, Jerry is healthy and is looking forward to a well-earned life of ease reserved for senior citizens.

To his utter consternation, Jerry is told that he missed paying a few monthly premiums. The shortage will have to be deducted from his pension. He cannot prove his payments because he did not keep a complete file of his pay slips. The amount in question is not much, but he is enraged.

Because coverage with GSIS is compulsory on the part of Jerry, receipts should not be needed to prove his payments. Somebody else is responsible for the shortage.

The law is clear. The head of office, treasurer, finance officer, cashier, disbursing officer, budget officer or other official or employee who fails or refuses to remit or delays remittances by more than 30 days is subject to a jail term of as much as 6 years and a fine of as much as P6,000, and are barred forever from holding public office or practicing a profession requiring a government license.

Also, the employer is the collecting agent of GSIS. Failure of the agent to collect and/or remit the premium should not be the fault of Jerry.

Finally, listen to this: The law goes on to say that failure of the members of the GSIS Board, including the chair and vice chair, to collect unpaid premiums, among other debts, shall subject them to imprisonment of at least six months and not more than one year, and a fine of at least P5,000 and not more than P10,000, without prejudice to any other civil or administrative liability.

When the supposedly unpaid premium is deducted from Jerry's pension, GSIS is punishing the victim. What GSIS should do, instead, is to punish the villains. Surely, there are a lot of these dirty characters crawling around the premises.

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Per DTI NCR permit #A3-1011 series of 2007: Promo valid from December 7, 2007 to January 30, 2008.

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY TO RECOVER COSTS FOR THE POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT OF THE CALIRAYA - BOTOCAN - KALAYAAN (CBK) BUILD - REHABILITATE - OPERATE - TRANSFER (BROT) POWER PROJECT, WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASE NO. 2007-159 RC

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION (NPC),
Applicant.

x--x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given that on November 19, 2007, the National Power Corporation (NPC) filed an application for the Commission's approval of its authority to recover costs for the Power Purchase Agreement of the Caliraya - Botocan - Kalayaan (CBK) Build - Rehabilitate - Operate - Transfer, with prayer for provisional authority.

In said application, NPC alleged, among other things, that:

1. Pursuant to its Charter and in the furtherance of the policies set forth under Executive Order No. 215 allowing private sector participation in power generation and in the implementation of Republic Act No. 7648 or the Electric Power Crisis Act of 1993, it has contracted and entered into a Build, Rehabilitate Operate and Transfer (BROT) Agreement on November 6, 1998 and its Supplemental Agreements dated September 14, 1999 and May 22, 2003, respectively, with the Industrial Metallugicas Percamona S.A. (IMPSA) of Argentina/CBK Power Co. Ltd., for the purchase and supply of electric power in accordance with Republic Act No. 6957 (otherwise known as "BOT Law"), as amended by Republic Act No. 7718 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, involving the 792MW CBK hydro Power Plant Project consisting of the following plants/generating units:

Plant Capacity/Type			
a.	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 1	:	168 MW
b.	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 2	:	168 MW
c.	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 3	:	174.3 MW
d.	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 4	:	174.3 MW
e.	Caliraya HEPP Unit 1	:	11.3 MW
f.	Caliraya HEPP Unit 2	:	11.8 MW
g.	Botocan HEPP Unit 1	:	10 MW
h.	Botocan HEPP Unit 2	:	10 MW
i.	Botocan HEPP Unit 3	:	0.8 MW

2. In a letter dated April 29, 2005, NPC was informed that the new indirect owners of CBK Power Co. Ltd. are: Electric Power Development Co. Ltd. (JPower) and Sumitomo Corporation through a sale of indirect interest which was completed on January 10, 2005;

3. Under the terms of the BROT and its Supplemental Agreements, IMPSA/CBK PCL now, the JPower and Sumitomo Corporation, shall among others, generate and supply for such period provided therein, the power requirements of the NPC who shall in turn purchase the same under the provisions of the BROT;

4. Schedule 7 of the BROT Agreement shows that the Capital Recovery Fees (CRF) is at the rate of $11.87/kW-Months for Contract Years 1 to 9 and $4.33/kW-Month for the remaining contract years. The Operation and Maintenance Fees (O & M Fees) is at a rate of P26.00/kW-Month. The CRF are the fees payable by NPC in respect to the recovery of the contractor's capital investment, including the return on investment. Whereas, the O & M Fees are fees payble by NPC to contractor in respect of services supplied to NPC. The letter of CBK Power Company dated October 6, 2003 declared the mentioned fees under the Agreement are lump-sum fees and cannot be borken down into components. However, in that same letter, CBK stated that it commited to a 75:25 debt-to-equity ratio and that for budget purposes, it has estimated its operational costs as follows: Personnel related - 48%; Spare Parts - 30%; Consumables - 22%;

5. Based on the data/figures mentioned in the preceding paragraph as provided by CBK, the NPC's IPP Contracts Management Department come up with the following Cost Breakdown/Details of the monthly CRF and O & M Fees of CBK BROT project. The O & M Fee is subject to Adjustment Factor based on the movement of the value of the Philippine Peso against the US Dollar.

Capital Recovery Fee:	$11.87/kW-Month	$4.33/kW-Month
	(Year 1-9)	(Year 10-25)
Debt Service	75% ($8.9025/kW-Mo)	75% ($3.2475/kW-Mo)
Cost of Equity	25% ($2.9625/kW-Mo)	25% ($1.0825/kW-Mo)

O & M Fee:		
	Base Price	Accumulated Value
	P26/kW-Mo.	P57.3508/kW-Mo.
Personnel Related 48%	- P12.48/kW-Mo.	P27.5284/kW-Mo.
Spare Parts 30%	- P7.80/kW-Mo.	P17.2052/kW-Mo.
Consumables 22%	- P5.72/kW-Mo.	P12.6172/kW-Mo.

6. In its letter to Mr. Gerald L. Katz, Chief Executive Officer of CBK Company dated March 18, 2005, requested information from the project proponent/contractor regarding the detailed breakdown of the rehabilitation and construction cost of CBK plants. Indicated in the response letter of CBK dated April 14, 2005, was their certified cost for the rehabilitation of Kalayaan I (Units 1 & 2), Caliraya and Botocan Hydroelectric Plants and the construction of Kalayaan II (Units 3 & 4) HEP which are as follows:

a.	Kalayaan I	-	$144 million
b.	Kalayaan II	-	$260 million
c.	Caliraya	-	$50 million
d.	Botocan	-	$33 million

7. It hereto provides the following reference data and information relative to the rehabilitation of the CBK Project undertaken:

a. Schedule 15 of the CBK BROT Agreement which is a brief description of existing CBK I Power plants prior to its rehabilitation;

b. Schedule 1 of the CBK BROT Agreement which details the scope of works to be undertaken by the proponent in the rehabilitation and upgrading of CBK and the design, supply and construct of Kalayaan II; and

c. The comparison of the Guaranteed Capacity and the result of the Net Contracted Capacity Test of the CBK Power Complex conducted by NPC starting from its completion dates.

8. It provides the following information on the completion dates of the rehabilitation of CBK Stage II hydroelectric power plants:

a. Caliraya
Unit 1 - October 16, 2002
Unit 2 - December 3, 2002

b. Botocan
Unit 1 - June 17, 2003
Unit 2 - June 17, 2003
Unit 3 - June 20, 2003

c. Kalayaan Stage I
Unit 1 - March 22, 2002
Unit 2 - February 8, 2001

d. Kalayaan Stage II
Unit 3 - March 22, 2002
Unit 4 - January 22, 2004

9. Its cumulative cost of purchased power comprising of O & M Fees and other amounts specified in the Contract and payment of CRFs (recorded in the NPC's books under Payment for Capacity and Infrastructure Fees), covering the entire CBK Complex since the commencement of construction and rehabilitation activies in 2001 amounted to Twenty-Six Billion P26.78 Billion) or an average of about Four Billion Pesos (P4.46 Billion) per annum;

10. Its average cost in peso per kilowatt hour (P/kWh) for the Rehabilitate-Operate-Maintain (ROM) and Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) portion of the BROT contract are P4.1394/kWh and P11.3784/kWh, respectively based on the May 26 to June 25, 2007 billing period;

11. The calculated impact of the cost of this contract on its grid rate in Luzon assuming the contract being applied in this petition is already approved by the Commission before the NPC's filing of the 7th GRAM covering the test period November 2005 to January 2006 shall be an increase of P0.1859/kWh or an additional revenue of P1,505,825,247.88. Likewise, the existing effective rates in Luzon should have been the figures under the effective rate column from the table below:

	APPROVED 7TH GRAM RATE (P/kWh)	GRAM RATE IF CBK WILL BE INCLUDED (P/kWh)	EXISTING EFFECTIVE RATE (P/kWh)	EFFECTIVE RATE (with CBK)
March 2007	0.2034	0.3893	4.8700	5.0559
April 2007	0.2034	0.3893	4.8700	5.0559
May 2007	0.1221	0.3080	4.7857	4.9716
June 2007	0.1221	0.3080	4.7857	4.9716

12. The capacity fee and operation and maintenance cost in line with the implementation of the contract is continuously being paid by NPC through financing while not recovering any amount since the start of the operation of the subject plant in 2001; and

13. Unless this petition is approved provisionally and immediately, its operations and financial viability will be seriously jeopardized.

The Commission has set the application for initial hearing and pre-trial conference on **January 24, 2008 (Thursday) at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 a.m.) at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Building, San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City**.

All persons who have an interest in the subject matter of the proceeding may become a party by filing, at least five (5) days prior to the initial hearing and subject to the requirements in the ERC's Rules of Practice and Procedure, a verified petition with the Commission giving the docket number and the title of the proceeding and stating: (1) the petitioner's name and address; (2) the nature of petitioner's interest in the subject matter of the proceeding, and the way and manner in which such interest is affected by the issues involved in the proceeding; and (3) a statement of the relief desired.

All other persons who may want their views known to the Commission with respect to the subject matter of the proceeding may file their opposition to the application or comment thereon at any stage of the proceeding before the applicant concludes the presentation of its evidence. No particular form of opposition or comment is required, but the document, letter or writing should contain the name and address of such person a concise statement of the opposition or comment and the grounds relied upon.

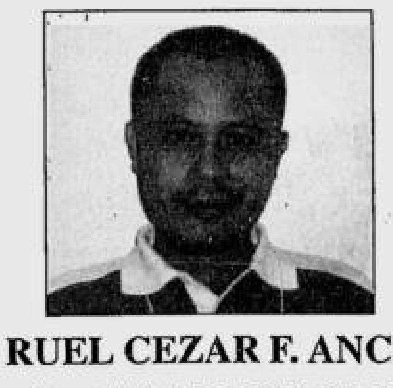
All such persons who may wish to have a copy of the application may request the applicant, prior to the date of the initial hearing, that they be furnished with a copy of the application. The applicant is hereby directed to furnish all those making such request with copies of the application and its attachments, subject to reimbursement of reasonable photocopying costs. Likewise, any such person may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman and the Honorable Commissioners, **ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN, RAUF A. TAN** and **JOSE C.REYES, Energy Regulatory Commission**, this 5th day of December, 2007 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) **FRANCIS SATURNINO C. JUAN**
Executive Director

(PDI - Dec. 19 & 26, 2007)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



MR. RUEL CEZAR F. ANCHETA

This is to inform the public that **MR. RUEL CEZAR F. ANCHETA**, whose picture appears above with last known addresses at Malacampa, Camiling, Tarlac is no longer connected with **DIWA DISTRINET INC. BAGUIO**, a distributor of **DIWA LEARNING SYSTEMS INC.** publications effective November 30, 2007.

Henceforth, he no longer has the authority to transact or conduct business in behalf of the above-mentioned companies.

DIWA MANAGEMENT

(PDI–December 19, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of La Union
City of San Fernando 2500
OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL TREASURER
December 10, 2007

FINAL NOTICE OF DELINQUENCY

MRS. GINA B. GO, Senior Vice-President & OIC
BAUANG PRIVATE POWER CORPORATION, Brgy. Payocpoc Sur, Bauang, 2501 La Union

Madam :

This is to inform you that our records show that your real property taxes due on property/properties registered in your name listed below remain unpaid from 1995 to July 31, 2007 which have been included in the list of delinquency to be auctioned on February 1, 2008 at the Provincial Capitol, City of San Fernando, La Union pursuant to the provisions of Section 254, Republic Act 7160(the Local Government Code of 1991):

CERTIFIED STATEMENT OF DELINQUENCY

Kind	Lot No.	Blk. No.	Prop. Index No.	TD. No.	Assessed Value	Taxable Year	Amount of Tax	Penalty	TOTAL
Mach.			008-08-010-007-001-M001	010-00486	19,428,730.00	1995- 2007	388,574.60	252,813.62	641,388.22
Mach.			008-08-010-007-001-M001	029-01603	21,645,266,480.00	1995-2007	432,905,329.60	281,656,091.14	714,561,420.74
Mach.			008-08-029-034-003-M001	029-01604	4,187,921,640.00	1995-2007	83,758,432.80	54,494,761.70	138,253,194.50
Mach.			008-08-029-034-003-M002	029-01605	108,643,160.00	1995-2007	2,172,863.20	1,412,316.72	3,585,179.92
Mach.			008-08-029-035-003-M003	029-01606	18,131,525,860.00	1995-2007	362,630,517.20	235,933,992.18	598,564,509.38
Mach.			008-08-029-035-003-M004	029-01607	9,682,486,180.00	1995-2007	193,649,723.60	125,992,015.08	319,641,738.68
Mach.			008-08-029-035-003-M002	029-01608	291,604,840.00	1995-2007	5,832,096.80	3,794,954.82	9,627,051.62
Mach.			008-08-029-036-006-M001	029-01609	53,783,710.00	1995-2007	1,075,674.20	699,853.16	1,775,527.36
Mach.			008-08-029-037-002-M001	029-01610	963,368,520.00	1995-2007	19,267,370.40	12,535,700.00	31,803,070.40
SUB-TOTAL					55,084,029,120.00		1,101,680,582.40	716,772,498.42	1,818,453,080.82
Bldg.			008-08-029-035-003-1001	029-01787	746,201,280.00	2003-2007	14,924,025.60	2,988,349.06	17,912,374.66
Bldg.			008-08-029-035-003-1002	029-01788	642,318,880.00	2003-2007	12,846,377.60	2,749,168.58	15,595,546.18
Bldg.			008-08-029-035-003-1003	029-01789	502,706,800.00	2003-2007	10,054,136.00	2,151,619.36	12,205,755.36
Bldg.			008-08-029-034-003-	029-01791	21,805,380.00	2003-2007	436,107.60	108,531.66	544,639.26
Bldg.			008-08-029-036-007-1001	029-01792	31,167,000.00	2003-2007	623,340.00	212,228.40	835,568.40
Bldg.			008-08-029-036-012-1001	029-01793	1,609,960.00	2003-2007	32,199.20	7,738.20	39,937.40
Bldg.			008-08-029-037-002-1001	029-01794	10,887,633.00	2003-2007	217,752.66	100,139.20	317,891.86
Bldg.			008-08-029-036-006-1001	029-01795	8,705,560.00	2003-2007	174,111.20	38,349.24	212,460.44
Bldg.			008-08-029-036-004-1001	029-01796	682,980.00	2003-2007	13,659.60	3,406.86	17,066.46
Bldg.			008-08-029-036-005-1001	029-01797	278,020.00	2003-2007	5,560.40	1,386.82	6,947.22
Bldg.			008-08-029-034-003-1002	029-01798	247,380.00	2003-2007	4,947.60	1,235.18	6,182.78
Bldg.			008-08-029-036-001-1001	029-01790	1,157,320.00	2003-2007	23,146.40	5,551.50	28,697.90
SUB-TOTAL					1,967,768,193.00		39,355,363.86	8,367,704.06	47,723,067.92
GRAND TOTAL					57,051,797,313.00		1,141,035,946.26	725,140,202.48	1,866,176,148.74

Barangay Payocpoc Sur, Bauang, La Union

Computations good up to July 31, 2007

Unless your above stated real property tax obligations are paid within ten (10) days from receipt hereof, or you show proof of payment by presenting your latest tax receipt to the Revenue Division of this Office within the same period of time, the following legal actions shall be taken to enforce collection of taxes, to wit:

1. Serve Warrant of Levy which shall operate with the force of legal execution;
2. Publish notice of delinquency in a newspaper of general circulation; and
3. Sell the property in a public auction sale, and the Title to property will be vested in the purchaser;

It is reminded that you have the right to redeem the auctioned property/ies within one (1) year from the date of sale upon payment to the Municipal Treasurer of the following:

1. Total amount of delinquent tax plus 36% interest due hereon;
2. Expenses of sale including cost of publication and other incidental expenses; and
3. Interest of two percent (2%) per month on the purchased price.

Very truly yours,
(Sgd.) VIOLETA B. ABENOJA
ICO - Municipal Treasurer
(Sgd.) FRANCIS R. E. ESTIGOY
Provincial Treasurer

(PDI – December 12 & 19, 2007)

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Opening concert for PPO in 2008

Gina Medina

LOVE IS THE THEME for the forthcoming Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) opening concert for 2008 slated on Jan. 11, 2008, 8 p.m. at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Main Theater. Featured guests are violinist Gina Medina and CCP Vice President and Artistic Director Fernando Josef.

Dubbed as "Love's Labours," the program starts with Finzi's Love's Labour's Lost Suite, op. 26B inspired by Shakespeare with Josef reading the three Soliloquies in Filipino. Followed by Vaughan Williams' Romance for Violin and Orchestra entitled The Lark Ascending and excerpts from Prokofiev's famous ballet Romeo and Juliet.

Ticket prices: P350/500/700/900, with discounts for students, senior citizens and groups. For subscriptions, please call Lilia Casasola-Januare at the CCP Marketing Department-832-1125 loc. 1806 or call the CCP Box Office–832-3704, Ticketworld at National Bookstore-891-9999 for tickets, or visit CCP website: www.culturalcenter.gov.ph.

OBITUARIES

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by your name;
You are mine."
- Isaiah 43:1

Conchita "Nena" Rastrollo Quirino

February 6, 1929 - December 17, 2007

Her husband **Tomas Syquia Quirino** (†), son of the late **President Elpidio Quirino**; children **Butch, Eddie, Cory, Poncy, Louie** (†), **Cecilia & Connie**; children-in-law **Christina, Anamarie, Felino & Cesar**; grandchildren **Miguel, Lissa, Dodie, Ali, Tamila, Paul, Chuck, Chris, Dan, Justin, Migui, Martina, Michael, Roger, Tommy** & great-grandchildren **Sage & Kisses**, request for your prayers.

Her remains lie in state at Sampaloc Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park), Sucat, Parañaque City.

Cremation will follow the 11:00 a.m. Mass on Thursday, December 20, 2007.

In lieu of flowers a donation to TULOY STREET CHILDREN FOUNDATION will be appreciated.

GLORIA GUERRERO SAGISI

(Widow of **Crispulo S. Sagisi** of Laoag City)

born April 3, 1915, peacefully joined her Creator on December 13, 2007 at 92 years old.

She is survived by her children **Glocrito, Cris Jr., Dahlia** and Minerva; Children-in-law **Vivien Batoyon, Francisca Dujale, Patricio Saldaña** and **Alfred Toloza**; Grandchildren **Patrick & Elizabeth Soutter, Clem-Ehros, Maria Louisa Navalta, Christina, Clarissa, AJ** and **Alan**; Great-grandson **Luis Carlos**; Brother **Fred** and Sister **Cresencia**; nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.

Her body lies at the family's residence in Laoag City. Last respects and viewing will be on December 22, 2007 at 9 a.m. to 12 nn at UCCP, Laoag City. Funeral services will be at 1:30 p.m. Interment will follow at the Laoag City Cemetery.

Zoilo Arrobio Andin, Sr.

29 SEPTEMBER 1926 in Claveria, Cagayan
15 DECEMBER 2007 in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga

Assistant Solicitor General, retired in 1991
University of the Philippines, College of Law, Class 1952
Alpha Phi Beta Fraternity, University of the Philippines
Past President, Rotary Club of Southern Pampanga
Past President, Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Pampanga Chapter

Ester Lingad Andin

Ma. Gilda†
Ma. Fides [Daks] and Alexander
Ma. Agnes [Gor] and Leo†
Ma. Eliza [Ando]
Zoilo Jr. [Boyet] and Diane
Ma. Perla Joyce [Peia]
Elmer [Tolong] and Rowena
Cecil [TI] and Ethel

Ma. Rosa Carmela, Zoilo Alexander Miguel, and Ma. Ana Patricia
Natasha and Lisa Nicole
Jan Christian, Jenny Cid and Jan Michael Eli
Alphonso Rafael and Zoe Arianna
Eduardo Luis and Mikaela Louise
Cyrus John and Tyler James

His remains lie in state at the Sampaguita and Orchid Rooms,
Good Shepherd Memorial Park
at MacArthur Highway, Dolores, City of San Fernando, Pampanga.

Interment shall be on Thursday 20 December 2007
immediately following the 9 a.m. mass.

Don't grieve for me, for now I am free. I am following the path God laid for me, I took His hand when I heard Him call, I turned my back and left it all. I could not stay another day, to laugh, to love, to work or play. Tasks left undone must stay that way for I have found that place at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void, then fill it with remembered joy, a friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss. Ah yes, these things, I too, shall miss. Be not burdened with times of sorrow; I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.

My life's been full, I savored much, good friends, good times, a loved one's touch. Perhaps my time seemed all too brief, don't lengthen it now with undue grief.

Lift up your heart and share with me. God wanted me now, He set me free.

There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

TO COMMEMORATE THE

5th Death ANNIVERSARY of Norma Tuason Chua

(March 15, 1946 - December 20, 2002)

MASSES WILL BE OFFERED FOR THE ETERNAL REPOSE OF HER SOUL ON THURSDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2007 AT THE FOLLOWING CHURCHES:

Santuario de San Antonio - *Forbes Park, Makati City*	6:15 a.m.
National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes - *Retiro Street, Quezon City*	6:30 a.m.
San Agustin Church - *Intramuros, Manila*	6:30 a.m.
Santuario de San Pedro Bautista - *San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City*	6:30 a.m.
Malate Catholic Church - *Malate, Manila*	7:00 a.m.
Manila Metropolitan Cathedral - *Intramuros, Manila*	7:30 a.m.
Santo Domingo Church - *Quezon Avenue, Quezon City*	12:15 p.m.
Christ the King Church - *E. Rodriguez Boulevard, Quezon City*	6:00 p.m.
Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel - *New Manila, Quezon City*	6:00 p.m.
Saint Paul the Apostle Parish - *Timog, Quezon City*	6:00 p.m.
Monasterio de Santa Clara - *Balanga, Bataan*	6:00 p.m.
Saint Andrew the Apostle Parish - *Bel-Air II, Makati City*	6:30 p.m.
Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat - *Mendiola, Manila*	8:30 p.m.

Her loving husband, **Eddie**; and daughter, **Eileen**; request the relatives, friends, and people whose lives she has touched to offer a prayer for her soul.
Her family also conveys sincere appreciation and gratitude to all who sympathized, remember, offer mass and prayers, and keep **Norma** alive in their memories and hearts.

"Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord.
And let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen."

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811-4370

Kalaw:
523-5570
loc. 115 or 116

Megamall:
635-0219; 635-0220

Bernardina Jaucian Anson de los Reyes

passed away on December 17, 2007
at the age of 91

Family and friends are welcome to
attend her wake at the PEA Chapel,
Our Lady of Assumption Parish
in Guinobatan, Albay
until December 21.

Interment will be on
December 22 at 4:30 p.m.
at the Guinobatan Cemetery.

I have
fought the
good fight,
I have
finished
the race,
I have
kept the
faith
(2 Timothy 4:7)

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Cecile Licad at the CCP

THE FRANCISCO Buencamino Sr. Music Foundation and the Cultural Center of the Philippines will present piano virtuoso Cecile Licad in a concert at the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Main Theater on March 28, 2008. The concert marks two events: the 125th birth anniversary of great Filipino musician and composer Francisco Buencamino and the 40th anniversary of Licad's debut performance with an orchestra at the age of seven.

"The year 2008 is a big year for both Cecile Licad and the Buencamino clan represented by the Francisco Buencamino Sr. Music Foundation, Inc.," Amelita D. Guevara, president of the Foundation said.

Licad belongs to the famous Buencamino clan. A grand niece of Francisco Buencamino, Sr., Cecile has always paid homage to her illustrious relative, performing many of his renowned works such as the Mayon Piano Concerto, Larawan, Hibik ng Diwa, among others, in international and local concerts.

For tickets and more information, please call Nanet B. Sinco at tel. nos. 426-7690 and 881-8097 and mobile tel. no. 0917-858-3238 or Amelita D. Guevara at tel. no. 810-3245

Subic Amino Hightech Corporation
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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

This is to inform the public that SMACO Engineering (M) Sdn. Bhd. Representative Office with
3/F PMT Bldg., #32 Dr. Maldo del Rosario St.,
Kapasigan, Pasig City
is hereby to close its services effective December 1, 2007.
We published this to conform with SEC Rules and Regulation.

The Management

(PDI–Dec. 5, 12 & 19, 2007)

NUEVA ECIJA III ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. – Area 2
2nd Floor Smile Arcade Bldg.,
Brgy. Atate, Palayan City
Telefax (044) 958-1053

NEECO II
Area 2

INVITATION TO SUBMIT BID PROPOSAL

To All Prospective Bidders:

Nueva Ecija II Electric Cooperative, Inc. – Area 2 (NEECO II-Area 2), in compliance with the guidelines of the Energy Regulatory Commission, invites interested parties to participate in the bidding or competitive selection process for the supply of energy requirements to its franchise area commencing on the year 2008 to 2018.

Interested parties must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) by hand to the NEECO II Area 2 Pre-qualifications, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC). The LOI, signed by an authorized representative, shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the interested party and name of the principal contact. It must be delivered by hand to and received by the PBAC at the NEECO II Area 2 Main Office with address at 2nd Floor Smile Arcade Building, Brgy. Atate, Palayan City not later than 12:00 noon, on January 9, 2008.

The details of the bidding or competitive selection process are contained in the Request for Proposal (RFP), which interested parties must secure from PBAC Secretary, Alicia Alcantara, during office hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) from December 19, 2007 to January 9, 2008, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00).

Only interested parties that submit the LOI on time and who have been issued and have paid for the RFP will be qualified to participate.

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General Manager

(Sgd.) **JUANITA G. IGNACIO**
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(PDI–December 19 & 26, 2007

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BSP sees trade deficit widening to $9.6B in 2008

Cites possible weakening of US economy, high oil prices

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas sees the country's trade deficit widening to $9.6 billion next year from this year's projected shortfall of $6.9 billion given uncertainties in the global environment.

Based on the latest official forecasts from the BSP, exports next year would reach $52.3 billion as against an import bill of $61.9 billion.

The bigger trade deficit expected for next year took into account various external risks such as a possible slowdown in demand from Western economies, particularly the United States, as well as high cost of crude oil importation.

Another dampening factor for exporters is the sharp appreciation of the peso against the dollar, which not only reduces the peso equivalent of their earnings but also erodes the price competitiveness of locally made merchandise.

The peso, which has risen by more than 16 percent since January, is Asia's best performing currency this year.

Despite bigger net trade outflows for next year, however, remittances from overseas Filipinos were expected to remain strong, thus supporting a current account surplus of $6.9 billion against the $6.7 billion estimated for this year.

The projected trade flows for 2008 were based on the government's target of a growth in exports of 8 percent as well as a rise in imports of 9 percent over this year.

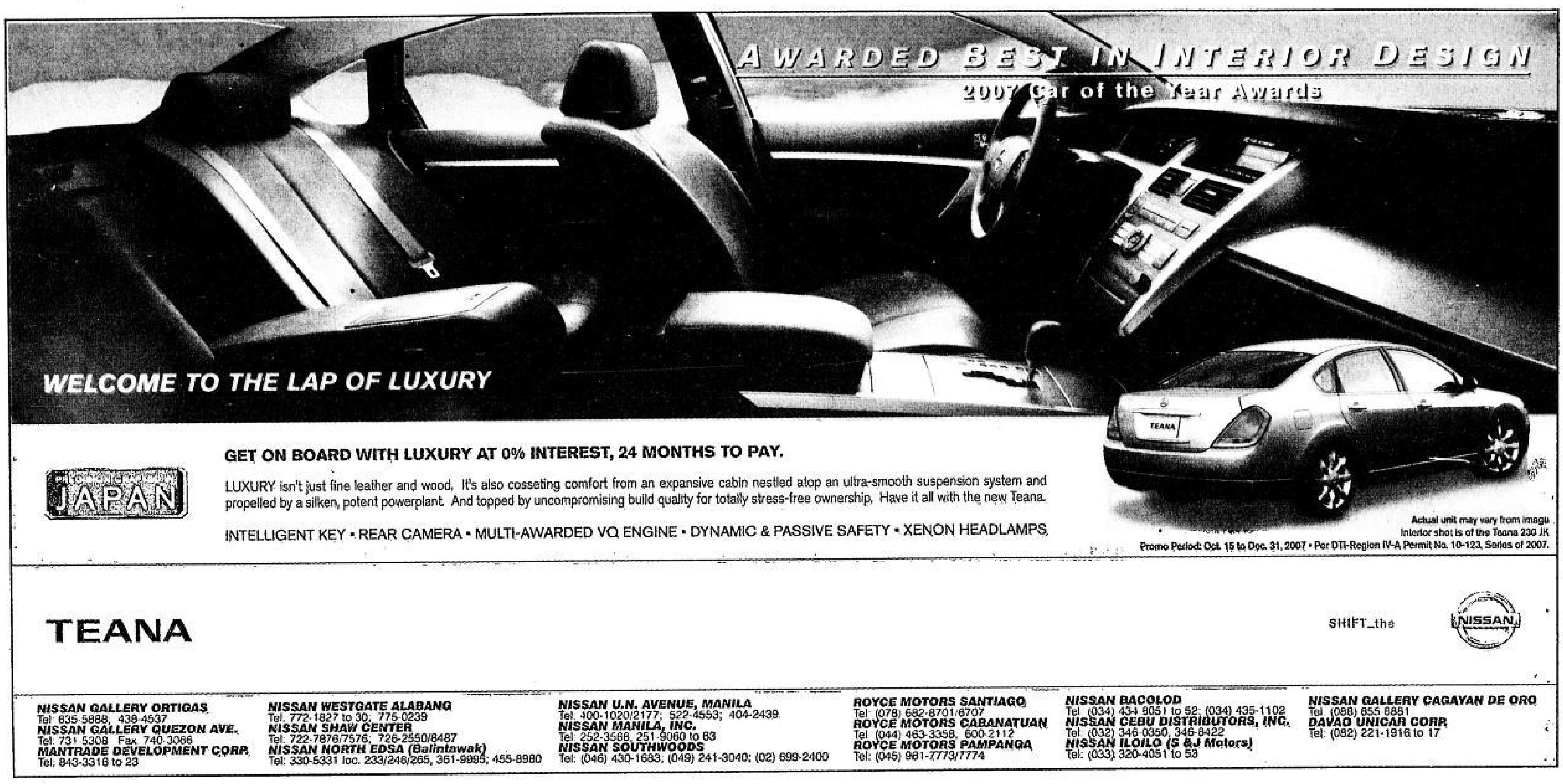
For 2007, the BSP earlier projected a growth in exports of about 8 percent and a year-on-year expansion in imports of 7 percent. In dollar terms, full-year exports were projected at $49.9 billion while the import bill was seen hitting $56.8 billion.

In the Asian Development Bank's December issue of Asia Economic Monitor, a semiannual review of East Asia's emerging markets, the bank noted that the contribution of net exports to gross domestic product among Southeast Asia's four biggest economies (the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia) fell to 0.6 percentage point in the third quarter from 3.4 percentage points in the second quarter.

The main factors for the decline included the weakening external environment and strengthening currencies, but strengthening domestic demand has also started to help narrow trade surpluses.

"In the Philippines, for example, the appreciation of the peso in real terms—mainly due to strong capital inflows combined with a surge in overseas worker remittances—has hurt the export competitiveness of the manufacturing sector and seen exports slowing," the ADB said.

But the bank noted that remittances has bolstered private consumption and the services sector has become the main driver of strong growth this year in the country, contributing 3.6 percentage points to the 6.6-percent expansion in the third quarter.



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Gov't reviews tax collection targets

Custom's goal seen reduced while that of BIR might be raised

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COLLECTION TARGETS FOR NEXT year of the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue are up for review, as the macroeconomic assumptions used in their projections were deemed outdated.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said officials from the Department of Finance, mother agency of the two bureaus, were set to meet with representatives of the Customs and the BIR to discuss the setting of the new targets.

The BOC was originally tasked to collect P254 billion in 2008, up 11 percent from this year's target of P228.2 billion.

The BIR is expected to collect P845 billion next year, 10 percent higher than its target of P765.9 billion for this year.

Beltran said the BOC's target could be reduced because of the strengthening of the peso.

BOC estimates showed it was losing P2.7 billion in potential import duties and taxes collection for every one unit appreciation of the peso against the US dollar.

As the local currency strengthens, the same dollar amount of imports translates to lower peso value. Duties are computed based on the peso value of imports.

The original 2008 target for the BOC was based on the assumption that the peso would average 48 to a US dollar. Last week, however, government economic managers revised the foreign exchange forecast for next year to between P42 and P45 to a dollar.

The BOC had been asking the government to reduce its collection target for this year and next year to take into consideration the peso appreciation.

The DOF, however, denied the request for this year's target but said next year's goal could be adjusted.

In the case of the BIR, Beltran said, its collection target for next year could even be raised to take into consideration the robust growth of the economy.

He said though that nothing was definite until after the DOF, BIR and BOC finished discussions on the 2008 revenue targets.

Economic managers last week revised the country's GDP growth target for next year to a range of 6.3-7 percent from the original goal of 6.1-6.8 percent, taking into account the impact of higher government spending on infrastructure and booming services sector.

In the first three quarters of this year, the economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, grew by 7.1 percent. This prompted confidence that the economy would exceed the full-year growth target of only 6.1-6.7 percent.

The BIR's collection performance, however, failed to match the growth in the economy.

Despite the higher-than-expected GDP growth so far, the BIR's collection in the first 11 months fell short by P53.5 billion of its target of P701.25 billion.

Revenue officials admitted earlier that the BIR's collection target for 2007 was no longer attainable.

The shortfall was blamed on the inefficiency of the tax collection system and dishonesty among taxpayers.

The BIR said, however, there were uncontrollable factors that made it difficult to meet the tax collection target for the year. It cited the drop in interest rates, which resulted in lower tax collection from income on bank deposits.

The BIR likewise blamed the slower-than-expected inflation, which it said resulted in lower-than-programmed collection of value-added tax on goods and services.

Peso slides to 41.98:$1

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY slipped back to the 42 level before closing at 41.98 against the dollar as the market locked in gains while scaling back earlier expectations of aggressive interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve.

Currency traders added that cash remittances from overseas Filipino workers for Christmas spending had thinned out this week because bulk of the money had been frontloaded in previous weeks.

The peso hit an intraday low of 42.08 and a high of 41.80 against the greenback. It shed 32.5 centavos from Monday's closing of 41.655.

The local currency's downward correction for the second trading session was likewise expected following almost two weeks of appreciating to nearly eight-year highs.

Banco de Oro-EPCI Bank strategist Jonathan Ravelas said the peso was pulled down by a knee-jerk reaction to the dollar's rebound against major currencies as well as expectations that the US Fed would veer away from aggressive monetary easing.

Napocor rates to go down

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSUMERS CAN EXPECT THE generation charge component of their electricity bills to go down in the first quarter in 2008 with the Energy Regulatory Commission's expected approval of National Power Corp.'s petition to recover generation and foreign exchange-related costs.

In an interview with reporters, ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said that due mainly to the strengthening of the peso and the efficient operation of some of Napocor's generation assets, the cost recovery applications would result in a reduction in rates.

He said he was expecting Napocor to file its ninth generation rate adjustment mechanism (GRAM) and eighth incremental currency exchange rate adjustment (Icera) applications by early next year.

"We'll take that up immediately so the consumers can feel its effect right away," he said, adding that the regulatory body was considering issuing a show-cause order seeking Napocor's explanation as to why its GRAM and Icera filings were late.

These filings cover generation and foreign exchange-related costs incurred from July to December 2006.

Rapu Rapu group to file for rehab

THE RAPU RAPU GROUP OF COMPANIES will seek court protection this week from creditors following a decision of Lafayette Mining Ltd. (LML) to go under voluntary administration.

Carlos G. Dominguez, chair and president of Lafayette Philippines, which oversees the Rapu Rapu group, said the local units would file a petition for rehabilitation with the court so it could continue normal operations. He said this was the best way to protect the group's stakeholders, particularly its host communities, employees and the environment.

The rehabilitation petition is expected to result in a court order instructing the group's present creditors and suppliers to continue their services and transactions with the local companies for as long as they were paid on cash basis, the group said in a statement.

Debt payments, under the petition, will be suspended until the court has approved a rehabilitation plan that will fairly settle all outstanding debts and ensure the continued operations of the company.

The voluntary administration of LML was reached after its board deemed that it could not continue to meet its obligations as and when they fall due.

Following Australian rules, two administrators had been appointed to take control of LML and to find ways to lighten the company's debt burden through the sale or restructuring of bank debts and/or raise new capital.

"In the end, the administration process in Australia and the rehabilitation in the Philippines will make the local units stronger financially by addressing its longstanding issues regarding under-capitalization, over-borrowing and poor hedging deals," he said.

Negotiations with new investors are still continuing, he said. Based on current term sheets, the investors will put in new money into the local units and buy the debt papers, wiping out its debts and allowing the operating companies to use its income for operations and community projects.

"This temporary legal process we are going through is actually a blessing for the Rapu Rapu project because it will finally resolve the financial issues the local management team has been urging LML to address," he said.

Coconut export receipts up 44.8%

By Amy R. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S COCONUT EXPORTS rose by 7.8 percent in September to 144,326 metric tons in copra terms from 133,825 MT a year ago, data from the Philippine Coconut Authority showed.

Gross export receipts jumped by 44.8 percent to $95.9 million from $66.2 million a year ago due to substantial price increases in the export markets, the PCA said.

Major export products showed mixed trends with coconut oil and desiccated coconut posting growths.

Exports of coconut oil reached 72,344 MT, up by 14.5 percent from 63,166 MT in the same period last year, while those of desiccated coconut rose 7.3 percent to 12,198 MT.

In contrast, copra meal shipment slumped 36 percent to 27,209 MT from 42,506 MT, while oleochemicals exports plunged 33.4 percent to 10,636 MT in copra terms from 15,978 MT.

However, the export volume in the first nine months of the year was 25.7 percent lower than last year at 1.15 million MT in copra terms.

In September alone, exports of coconut oil consisted of 54,924 MT crude coconut oil (CNO), 13,986 MT cochin oil (refined, bleached oil) and 3,434 MT RBD oil (refined, bleached and deodorized oil).

Gokongwei firm expands BPO facilities

ROBINSONS LAND CORP. sees the business process outsourcing sector fueling the growth of its property development business and that of the real estate industry as a whole in the next three years.

This prompted the company, now the country's second largest office space/BPO/call center provider, to take a more aggressive stance in building facilities for this sector all over the country.

To date, RLC has leased out about 140,000 square meters to BPOs and another 130,000 sq. m. are either under construction or are in the final planning stages.

According to the company, more than 80 percent of the five RLC office buildings in Makati and Ortigas Center are occupied by BPO firms and call centers.

Also, BPOs and call centers occupy about 40,000 sq. m. of space in Robinsons Malls in Novaliches, Mandaluyong City, Sta. Rosa, Bacolod City and Lipa City.

RLC is setting grounds in Mandaluyong City; Paco, Manila; Cebu City; and Tacloban City.

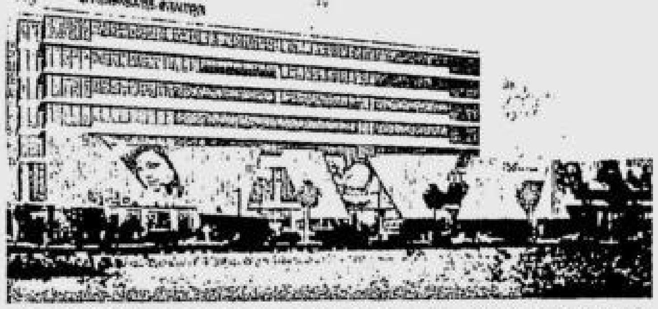
Henry Yap, business unit general manager of the firm's office buildings division, said RLC's existing sites in Makati and Ortigas were fully leased out to BPO firms.

Yap said demand for space from both existing and new players remained strong.

He said RLC was ready to turn over Robinsons Cybergate Center (RCC) Tower 3 by the first quarter 2008 to its tenants.

"Accenture, a major tenant in RCC Towers 1 & 2 will be our anchor tenant at the newly built Tower 3. Negotiations are also in the final stages for the pre-lease of the remaining floors," he said.

RCC is an ideal area for call center operations because of its proximity to Robinsons Forum, a shopping mall that offers gadgets, cell phones and other service outlets.


AN ARTIST'S perspective of RLC's Cebu Mall, which will house Robinsons Cybergate Cebu.

"Construction plans are also underway for the fourth Tower within the Pioneer Cybergate Complex," added Yap.

RLC is also setting the trend by building the first BPO center in Manila inside Robinsons Otis Mall, located in Paz Guanzon Street, Paco.

The Otis BPO center has a net leasable area of 10,000 sq. m., with a fit out capability for 1,500 seats.

A mixed use model similar to the Otis BPO project is expected to rise along Fuente Osmena Rotunda area in Cebu City. The facility, called the Robinsons Cybergate Cebu, is scheduled for completion in the last quarter of 2009. It will be built on top of a two-level shopping mall with more than 7,000 parking slots in the basement.

RLC's office buildings division's plans include developments in the former lot of Medical City along San Miguel Avenue, Mandaluyong City and a call center building right beside the Robinsons Tacloban Mall.

Filinvest sets aside ₱22B for projects

FILINVEST DEVELOPMENT CORP. OF THE Gotianun family is earmarking P22 billion for projects in 2008.

Following the company's 25th listing anniversary celebration held at the Philippine Stock Exchange, FDC president Josephine Gotianun-Yap said the company was spending P16 billion in 2008 for projects of its key subsidiaries such as its sugar manufacturing units and Filinvest Alabang Inc., its commercial property and condominium developer. Another P6 billion will also be spent by Filinvest Land Inc., FDC's residential arm.

Yap said out of the capital expenditure set for next year, P6 billion would be spent by FAI for the initial development of "Entrata," a condominium, retail and hotel project at the Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang, and "The Levels," a four-tower middle income residential complex also in Alabang.

FLI president Joseph Yap said FLI was embarking on medium rise residences—one in Ortigas and two in locations that would be announced soon.

To help raise funds for its planned investments, FDC will be issuing up to 3.5 billion common shares. *Elizabeth S. Lacson*

Gov't posts record ...

From page B1

of government efforts to sell state-owned assets, Teves said.

In November, the government sold its remaining 60-percent stake in PNOC-Energy Development Corp. for P58.5 billion. Of the amount, P47 billion went to state coffers and helped boost the national government's budget position. The balance went to PNOC.

Other state assets that were sold earlier in the year, which helped the government achieve a P12.6-billion surplus for the first 11 months, were the 20-percent stake in PNOC-EDC, 46 percent of Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., a minority stake in Philippine National Bank, and the old Iloilo airport property.

Total revenues that went to the national government as a result of this year's privatization program reached P90 billion.

In November, the government generated P148.3 billion in revenues while expenditures reached P94.2 billion.

On the other hand, the cumulative, 11-month budget surplus was a result of the P1.04 trillion in total revenues while expenditures hit P1.03 trillion.

Costs of goods ...

From page B3

leaders to keep prices of commodities, relatively stable during the holidays.

Also, prices of fish remain stable, but vegetables now cost more, particularly those from Northern Luzon where farms had been hit by frost, Favila said.

Last month, trade officials marked a downtrend in the prices of rice and sugar. Prices of other basic commodities are seen to remain stable in the run-up to the holidays.

Trade Undersecretary Zenaida C. Maglaya, who is in charge of consumer welfare, said the decrease in sugar prices was attributed to continuous deliveries of new harvest from Iloilo and Mindanao provinces.

Maglaya also said the DTI has increased its monitoring activities in wet markets and supermarkets in Metro Manila and 15 other regions.

Maglaya said consumers could report or refer a complaint through DTI Text Reklamo by keying in DTI<space>complaint and send to 2920 for Globe and Smart subscribers.

A celebration of peace

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

IT WAS IN 1999 WHEN THE Bishop-Ulama Forum, a group of religious leaders, decided to adopt the Zamboanga City's Peace Week as an important component of its peace advocacy.

The celebration has become the venue for religious leaders and other stakeholders to promote peace in all forms, even luring other people including those in the military and the rebel movement.

Every year, the organizers of the event, which is being held in Mindanao every last Thursday of November to the first Wednesday of December, come up with different activities aimed at promoting peace among communities in Mindanao.

Laudable efforts

What is laudable is the fact that organizers do not leave any stone unturned to ensure the event's success and to send the message across all sectors that what the island needs is peace and prosperity.

This is not to say that Mindanao is not peaceful because, contrary to the notion of outsiders who think Mindanao is all war, the island is among the most peaceful places in the country, if not in the world.

Except for some armed confrontations between rebel groups and the military or between terrorist groups and the military, Mindanao is generally peaceful. The problem is that news reports highlight the armed conflicts, not the island's beauty and natural resources.

We read travel advisories from different embassies banning their citizens from visiting Mindanao. This is unfair because the island of Mindanao is huge and most of its key cities remain very peaceful.

Celebrating peace in Davao

Considering that it is a melting pot in a strictest sense of the word, celebrating the week of peace is one apt act to show that people of Mindanao are peace loving except for a gun-toting few.

In this year's week of peace, the different areas in Mindanao came up with their own special activities. In Davao City, for instance, organizers brought Christians to Muslim communities and vise versa to show the harmonious relationship that exist between them. They also persuaded people in uniform to actively participate in the activities to show everybody that they were among those who were working for peace.

In fact, Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, in a prepared speech read by City Administrator Wendel Avisado during the opening of the celebration in Davao City, expressed hopes that soldiers and rebel groups would eventually give up their guns in favor of Bibles.

Sustaining peace

The Mindanao Week of Peace reinforces the continuing negotiations between the government and the Moro rebels or, in the case of the peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front, helps in exploring avenues to strengthen the implementation of this agreement.

But then again, even if we celebrate peace the whole year, real peace would never be realized if we do not give prime importance to the ways of achieving it. We have to look beyond our own selfish motives and think as "One Mindanao."

The national government and our Mindanao leaders should be able to deal with the effects of injustices, human rights and poverty. These are not new problems, these were passed on from one administration to another. Election promises are made in exchange for the Mindanao votes, but nothing significant has been achieved.

After all, Mindanao has what it takes to sustain peace in the most real terms.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is an advocate for the development of the island. She is chair of Joji Ilagan Foundation. E-mail comments jojibian2@yahoo.com.)

Grid concessionaire told to retain composition

PSALM bars winning Transco bidder from changing setup of consortium

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND Liabilities Management Corp. has disallowed any change in the composition of the winning bidder for the 25-year National Transmission Corp. concession.

PSALM said the group of Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp., Calaca High Power Corp. and State Grid Corp. of China would have to be the exact same group that would operate the nationwide transmission grid once they have secured a congressional franchise to do so.

This was imposed on the winning bidder to ensure their compliance with the citizenship requirement stipulated in the Constitution, PSALM said.

Under the Constitution, grantees of a public franchise should meet the 60-percent Filipino ownership restriction.

The Transco bidding rules require the winning bidder to first incorporate the concession company that will apply for the congressional franchise to run the transmission system. The group that won the concession bidding should be the same one to operate, maintain and expand Transco.

According to PSALM, this means that the Monte Oro consortium could no longer take on any more partners, other the ones already in the group.

The consortium is also barred from changing the equity structure of the concession corporation for three years unless, as in other franchises, Congress requires the concession corporation to conduct an initial public offering to open a portion of the ownership of the concession corporation to the public.

The Monte Oro-led consortium edged out its sole competitor—the group of San Miguel Energy Corp., TPG Aurora BV of the Netherlands and TNB Prai Sdn Bhd of Malaysia—with a bid of $3.95 billion, as against $3.905 billion.

Until a franchise is secured, Transco would remain under government control.

Gov't considers additional cuts in foreign loans

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT MAY FURTHER CUT its foreign borrowing program for 2008 in favor of domestic loans in order to reduce the impact of an appreciating peso on exporters and families of overseas Filipino workers.

According to Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, the government's recently revised borrowing program of a 70:30 mix, in favor of domestic credit, may still be changed.

Originally, the borrowing program for 2008 was set at a mix of 64:36, which represented the share of domestic and foreign loans to total borrowings for the year.

"As of the moment, this (70:30) is the borrowing program," Teves said in a press briefing yesterday. "But the government could stretch it further to 75:25 in favor of more domestic borrowings depending on opportunities."

Teves said the 30-percent share of foreign borrowings to total government borrowings for next year translated to an absolute amount of $2 billion, or P90 billion (officials used an exchange rate of P45:$1).

Reducing the share to 25 percent therefore will cut the absolute amount of foreign borrowings to $1.67 billion or P75 billion.

Government fiscal managers were forced to change the borrowing program for next year to cut the share of foreign loans to total loans as the peso strengthened to higher-than-expected levels.

Foreign borrowings are normally denominated in US dollars, therefore further building up the country's already growing dollar holdings. The Philippines' increasing gross international reserves, now at about $32 billion, has pushed the peso to a seven-and-a-half year high.

The peso recently broke into the 41-to-a-dollar territory, and averaged at 46.6 to a dollar from January to November—stronger than the 47 to 49 assumed by economic managers when they drafted this year's budget program.

Filipino artists get to make a dent on GDP

By Riza T. Olchondra

COPYRIGHT-BASED INDUSTRIES, SUCH as the arts, have been contributing 4.82 percent to the country's gross domestic product, the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IP Philippines) said.

IP Philippines, citing a survey of the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA), said in a statement that copyright-based industries account for three to six percent of overall economies.

In the Philippines, copyright-based industries employ an estimated 317,000 workers, representing 11.1 percent of total employment in large establishments.

"Given the sector's contribution to the economy, we must protect the sector from intellectual property rights violations, lack of recognition and reward systems, delays in the issuance of certificates of registration, and the lack of provisions for the protection of copyright owners," IP Philippines director general Atty. Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said.

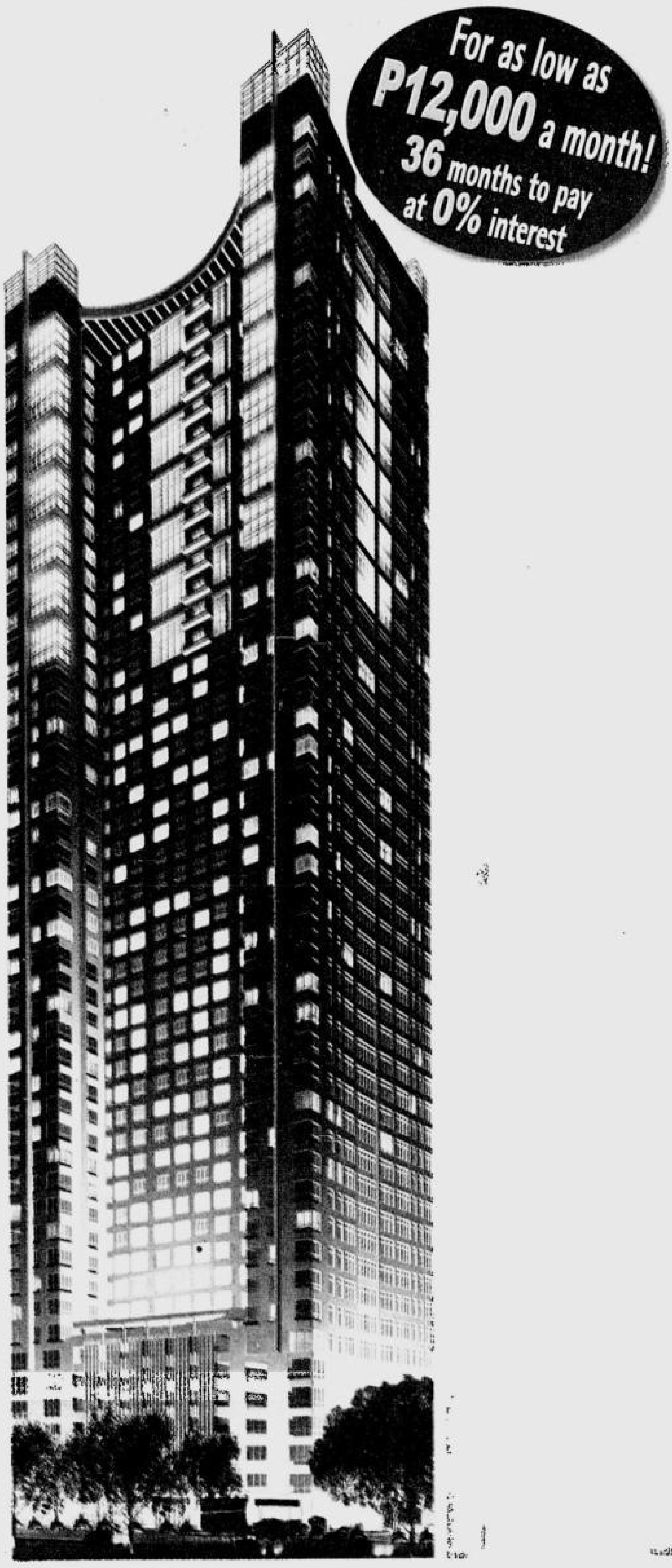
As part of efforts to promote awareness and protection of intellectual property, IP Philippines has forged partnerships with industry groups. For the arts, it launched TutoK Kasaysayang at its Alab Art Space and Innovation Area.

TutoK is a visual artists' collective that uses the visual medium as a channel for various advocacies. Kasaysayang, the theme of the exhibition, is a two-part group exhibition focusing on Philippine history where there will be a forum on art, history and intellectual property rights at the close of the exhibition on Jan. 18, 2008.

"The spaces, particularly Alab, are expressions of our commitment in support of the copyright and other creative industries," Cristobal said.

Copyright protects original expressions of literary, scholarly, scientific and artistic creations. Copyright extends to software programs, compilation of databases and derivative works.

Copyrighted material includes dramatizations, translation, adaptation, abridgement, arrangements and other alteration of the work.



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10 things to consider if you're giving a car this Christmas

By Tessa R. Salazar

WOW! HOW WE ENVY the recipient of your million-peso gift! If you are parting with some hard-earned moolah, then we're sure this gift is truly straight from the heart and not just from the hip pocket.

Though the intention is heartfelt, the buying decision must be dictated by the mind. So before opening your purses or writing anything down on your checkbook, read on.

1 **Treat the glossy advertisements as tempting mermaids.** They may lull you into a fantasy world where everything is perfect for you. Consumer Reports magazine, for instance, has cited one key mistake of impulse buyers: Falling unreasonably in love with a single vehicle model, which would most likely blind you from other options that may be better for your needs.

When this happens, you tend to throw caution to the winds—skip the test-drive, focus only on the monthly payment when negotiating, buying the "deal" instead of the vehicle, and forgetting about doing more research on your prospective vehicle.

2 **Drive, drive, drive it first.** It's a must. Test-drive the prospective vehicle. Word of mouth is good, but you can't ride on good feedback. Take at least 30 minutes to conduct a complete test-drive and perform a thorough walk-around of any vehicle you're considering, as Consumer Reports has advised.

Car experts always stress: go to the highway and listen for unusual noises and feel the suspension. Test the shifters, they should play smoothly in case it's an automatic transmission, or they should not lurch suddenly if you're on a manual transmission. Check the blind spot and the turning radius when turning, parking or backing. Find a safe area to test the brakes, depending on how far the pedal travels. The feel of the brakes should inspire confidence that the vehicle will stop in a relatively short distance. Getting the car suited for your recipient's needs, his/her driving habits and his environment may actually delay his or her next trip to the auto mechanic.

Mandy Eduque, Automobile Association Philippines director, said whether the car is "new or used, the biggest mistake of a customer in buying a car is not test-driving it." Ferman Lao, SpeedLab shop owner and Top Gear Philippines' technical editor, stressed that one should never buy a car without test-driving it.

3 **Start researching before buying.** This includes looking at respectable local automotive online Websites that are consumer-oriented, asking a reliable car buff or a neighbor on the same car model that he or she has and then, (we can't stress this enough) actually taking your future car out for a spin—and not just a spin around the block but an actual extended test-drive.

Eduque said: "The buyer must research on what has been the experience on a car, especially reliability and service records." Eduque recommends buyers to read Consumer Reports and other reputable car magazines.

And as reported by the INQUIRER Motoring during last year's "10 ways to prevent auto repair nightmares": When in doubt with local or foreign car reviews, do your own research and consult a trusted and knowledgeable car mechanic. Look beyond the styling of a car and pay attention to details (especially at the heart and soul of the car, its engine bay).

4 **Check the cost of maintenance.** Ask for the warranty services, prepare a list of the common parts being replaced for the first three years, and ask for the prices of these parts. Compare these side by side with competitor cars. With your trusted and knowledgeable mechanic, have them compared with the differences in the quality of the parts as well as the prices.

UP Prof. Edwin N. Quiros, a mechanical engineer, added that availability of parts, safety and resale value should also be considered.

"It might be worth to stretch the budget a certain amount if you are going to get a much better car, thus better value for money," Lao said.

5 "If the vehicle you're eyeing is used, **have a mechanic go over the car and check the car's registration papers with the LTO before paying,**" Eduque advised.

6 Are you closed to other options? Don't be, Lao urges. It's a common mistake and one of the more frequent regrets of car buyers. **Always keep your options open until the actual sale.**

7 **Pay attention to warranties when buying a car.** In an interview with the DTI consumer assistance and protection center last year, it was learned that a lot of people who bought brand-new cars didn't pay much attention to the terms of warranty and the conflicts arising from this situation. Some car owners demanded replacements right away, but since they had signed the terms of the warranty, their arguments went all for naught. As DTI pronounced, "If you don't agree to the terms of warranty, don't buy it. You bought it, signed it, that means you agree to it."

8 "**Many Filipinos don't read what they sign,**" according to the DTI consumer assistance and protection center. "This careless habit of signing everything away leads to so many unresolved complaints."

9 Knowledge is power, so know **as much as there is to know about the product** before buying it, not **after** buying it.

10 And as the DTI consumer assistance advised: **Get your own copy of your consumer rights and responsibilities.** DTI consumer assistance said the first entity that would actually protect your rights is yourself. The DTI consumer hotline is 811-8231, or e-mail complaints to dtincr4@info.com.ph. Get an online copy of the Consumer Act of the Philippines or Republic Act 7394.

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POLICE VISIBILITY TO THE MAX. The mayor observes that people actually take pictures of the stylish Strada.

JV's stylish Stradas define police visibility in San Juan

By Tessa R. Salazar

IT'S CRIMINAL TO RIDE IN THE backseat of this vehicle. And in Mayor JV Ejercito's turf in San Juan, that's meant quite literally.

Though the image of San Juan's police force is "spruced up" for the holidays, more important is adding a bit more confidence and that "*sindak*" factor to the city's 250 or so law enforcers on patrol.

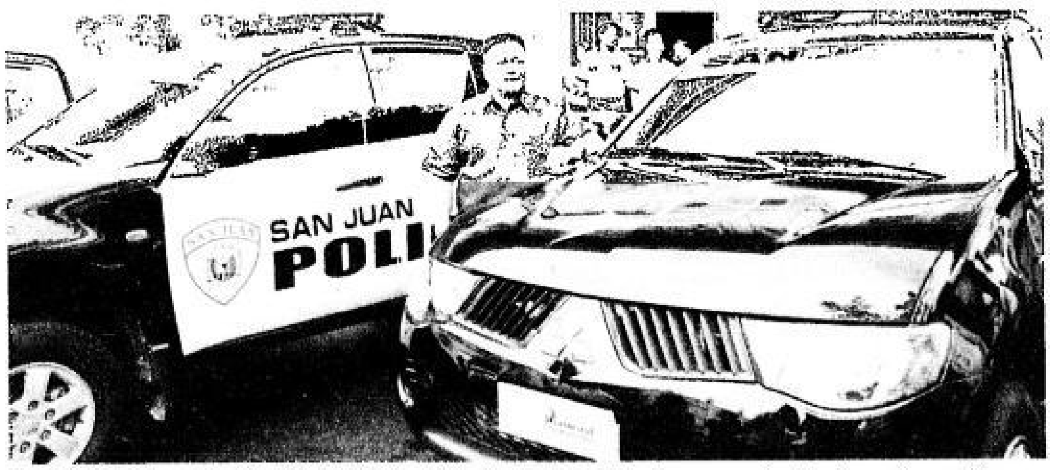
JV, a recent TOYM (Ten Outstanding Young Men) awardee, recently added six spanking new Mitsubishi Strada pickups to his fleet of police vehicles.

The brand-new Stradas form part of San Juan's refleeting program, along with six Toyota Hi-Lux pickups and Innova vehicles acquired last year.

More reliable, durable

"Pickups are more reliable, more durable and I think it will last longer than ordinary sedans or cars, which may not last five years considering how the policemen use the cars because of the demands of the job," JV told INQUIRER Motoring during the recent turnover rites of the new Stradas at the San Juan City Hall.

He said, in jest, that the decision to buy the Mitsubishi pickup was also due in part to the name "Strada." He quickly added that the Strada has been a proven vehicle in terms of performance, and the pickup's aggressive look fit the force perfectly.



ITCHING to buy one for himself, JV says he's contented to have one for the force's use. "I see them every day, so it's like me owning one already."

Performance

"When I test-drove one vehicle, I was surprised that it was powerful and quiet, considering it was diesel-powered. I think the performance made me decide to get these (as) patrol cars. At the same time, they do look very nice. I think the image is very important for the police, because when responding to a crime scene, you wouldn't feel confident with old patrol cars," JV said.

He added that the San Juan police have been receiving "a lot of good comments because of our very nice patrol cars. They said the image of our police force is now a notch higher than the others because of our ruggedly handsome cars."

It remains to be seen, though, if San Juan's criminals would now be more willing to be caught because of the Stradas.

NO more old beat-up police squad cars for the hardworking law enforcers of San Juan

---

Give your car a wet look shine

YOUR 13TH-MONTH PAY OR Christmas bonus would go a long way if you invest it on your car. And what better way to improve your daily ride's appearance than by giving it that "wet look" shine!

Yes, you can give your vehicle the luster it deserves by bringing it to The Wet Look, the premier auto refinishing shop in the metro. And the best part is: The Wet Look is having a special Christmas washover promo this holiday season.

Wet Look washover

Danny Tuason, president of The Wet Look, said subcompact car owners can give their precious rides the famous Wet Look washover for a mere P25,500. For this rate, car owners can have truly shiny car not only for the whole of 2008 but for several more years after that. This is because The Wet Look uses high-quality 2K paints that last even under extreme conditions.

The Wet Look is the only shop that gives a standard 24-month warranty on their washovers, which is proof of the quality of its work.

Tuason said the special promo runs for a very limited time only, specifically from Dec. 19, 2007 to Jan. 16, 2008. For more information on other rates, visit The Wet Look at 1267 Batangas St., San Isidro, Makati City or call 815-4205 or 888-4342. You may also e-mail your inquiries at info@thewetlook.com.ph or visit The Wet Look's website at www.thewetlook.com.ph.

Yearend special deals from Subaru

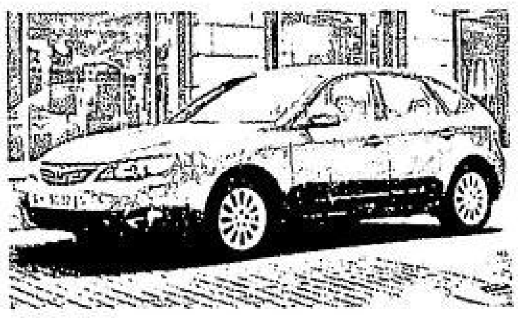
MOTOR IMAGE PILIPINAS, THE EXCLUSIVE distributor of Subaru, will cap off its successful year in the market by offering special deals for the whole lineup including the recently introduced 2008 Impreza 2.0R Sport. The year 2007 has been remarkable for Subaru after numerous recognitions including the recent 2007 Car of the Year awards for the Impreza, Forester and Outback winning in their respective categories.

Last November, Motor Image launched the all-new Impreza marking the entry of Subaru in the mainstream sedan/hatchback market. All Subaru models will be offered in special financing packages only for this month.

This year has gone quite well for the once-known niche market brand with a number of events and recognitions that have announced the arrival of Subaru in the market. Russ Swift started the year for Subaru by showing the prowess of its vehicles in the recent Manila International Auto Show.

Exhilarating introduction

For first-time Subaru customers, the event gave them an exhilarating introduction to the world of Subaru's symmetrical all-wheel-drive (AWD) technology with world-renowned precision driver Russ Swift driving the Impreza through his trademark moves—reverse spin, hand-brake park, and parallel park; the "dance" routine and two-wheel driving leading to the climax with his trademark "doughnuts."



IMPREZA

Subaru also received a number of recognitions from various award winning bodies including the 2006 and 2007 Car of the Year best SUVs awards for the Forester 2.5 XT and the Outback 3.0R from the Car of the Year (Coty) group.

The Impreza WRX also won the nod of the group as the best sportscar for 2007 and the same recognition this time from the People's Choice Awards. The respected auto magazine C! also cited the Legacy 2.0R, the Forester 2.5 XT and Impreza WRX STI as winners of Editors' Picks for the executive class, compact SUV and sports sedan categories, respectively.

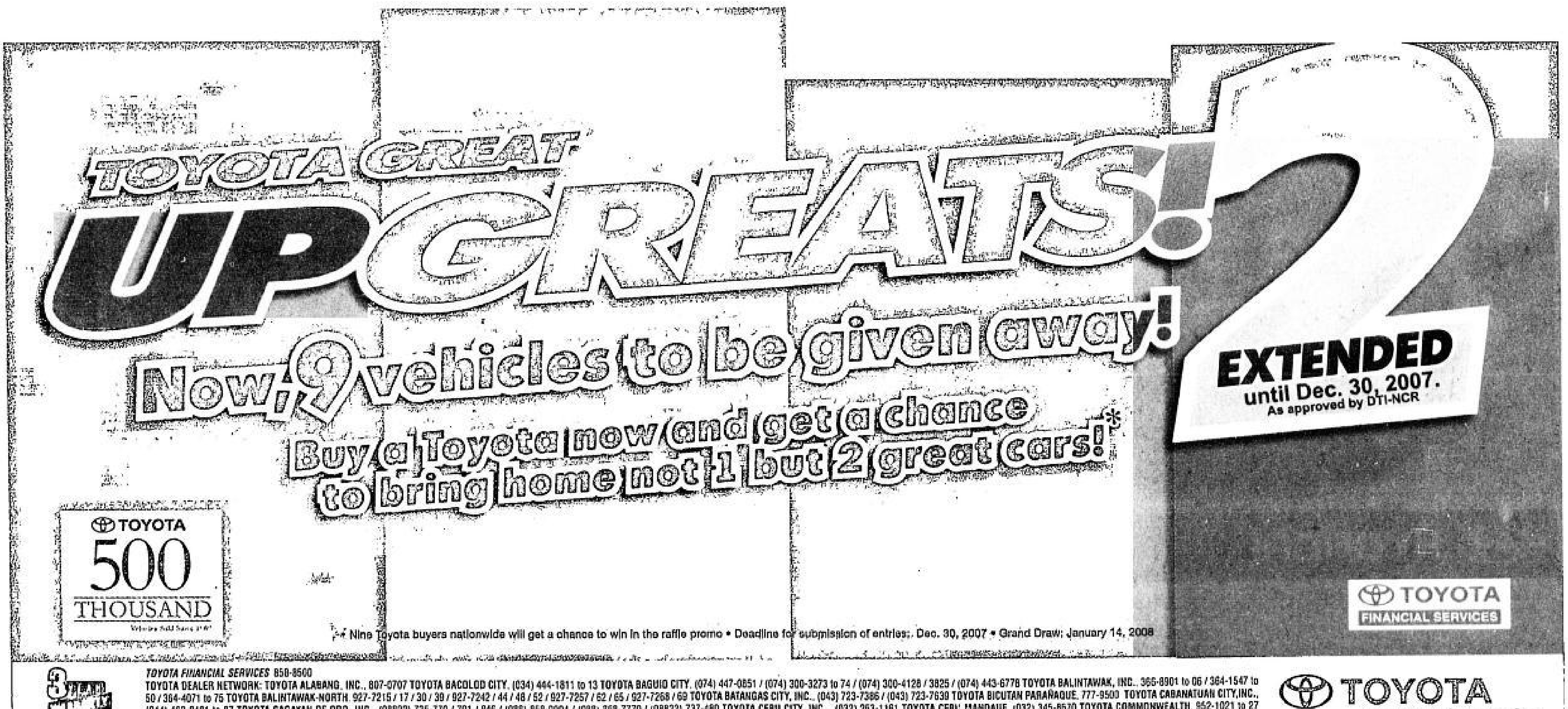
Special financing deals

Motor Image will bring to a close this fantastic year by offering special financing deals for all models including the all-new Subaru Impreza 2.0R-Sport.

Backed up by the country's top financial institutions BPI, Banco de Oro, Philam Savings Bank and PSBank, special all-in-one down payment plans which already include a 3-year LTO registration and accessories such as tint, floor matting and seatcovers, are made available for all customers only for this month. Low monthly and low down payment plans are also available for all models.

Customers can also get the chance to feel or test their desired vehicles through the test-drive units available for all models. They can choose to test-drive Subaru's complete model lineup—the Outback 3.0R, Forester 2.5 XT and 2.0R, Legacy 2.0R and the all-new Impreza 2.0R-Sport and WRX 2.5 Turbo.

Interested customers can visit the Subaru Greenhill showroom and can also check the company's website www.motorimage.net.



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Read before Christmas shopping

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

IN THE MARKET FOR SOME NEW metal this holiday season? Finally got the 15th month pay announced at the company Christmas party? Bet the house and lot on black and won? Robbed a Third World nation? Whatever circumstances have brought you to this point, putting the funds together for a new purchase is actually the easy part.

Choosing wisely, well, that's another matter altogether. Here are a few points to ponder for those in the new car market this holiday season—and boy, I'm sure there a lot of you, itching to get your new rides.

Just because the old Brand Z Model X car you bought six years ago was a hoot to drive doesn't automatically mean the newest one in the showroom is any better. There is even a distinct possibility the 2008 Brand Z Model X you are lusting for is much less car for much more money. Let's think about that for a bit.

Alterations

Cars are constantly changed, model to model, by those who build them. Very often these alterations pander to market research, in an effort to sell to a larger segment of drivers. Sad that for more and more cars these days, that it seems that focused group discussion dictates more of what a car will become than cutting edge engineering and road testing sessions. Maybe it is easier to sift through libraries of survey forms than to drive a decent lap of the Nurburgring Nordschleife, who knows?

Rising costs of the design process and actual manufacturing are also affecting the car as we know it. Sheet metal is getting thinner. Plastics are getting cheaper. You get the picture. We must remember that each car sold in the market must reflect positively on a company's bottom line. The automobile industry is a business after all and not a charitable institution. The owners and directors of car companies need to eat too.

So look before you leap. For the consumer, blind brand loyalty is most often a losing proposition. There are those of us who just keep buying from a single manufacturer, year after year, decade after decade. Believing that cars never change over time, that they display the same attributes from one generation of automobile to the other is really quite foolish.

Research

Once you've gotten over any biases and discrimination, you can move on. The next step is equally critical. With all the choices out in the market, the question must be asked of where one is to begin. It's simple really. Research is the key.

Easily 90 percent of what's being sold to the public doesn't deliver any sort of real value. Whether it drives like grocery cart, is as practical to use as a pogo stick or looks like its been built by Worker's Toy Collective 168 in the mainland—please test-drive cars to figure out what to stay away from. This is the only way to ascertain which tenth of the market works, and works well for you.

Liking what you drive

Personally liking what you drive is important, as automobile ownership is a losing proposition from the moment you drive out the showroom. Within a month of bringing home a brand spanking new car, all one is left with is shrinking residual value and a vehicle that will begin breaking down within a year of operation.

Remember that cars are merely mechanical things and even the simplest machines eventually break. If you've ever stripped a screw in your life, you know what I mean.

The odd-winning proposition still lurks around the Philippine automotive market. These are cars that offer great, sometimes unbelievable value to the consumer. Please note that these cars are the exception and not the rule. Go out, find them and buy them.

Inquirer reporter wins in Ford Awards

By Charles E. Buban

FOR FEATURING MICHELLE YU, THE country's first lady drifter, INQUIRER Motoring reporter Tessa R. Salazar won the recently concluded 2007 Henry Ford Awards in the Motor Sports Feature category.

The Motor Sports Feature category, a new addition for this year's edition, is conferred to a reporter whose best story on any of four-wheel motor sports event (rally racing, track racing, off-roading, Formula 1, Formula 3 and other similarly related topics) was published.

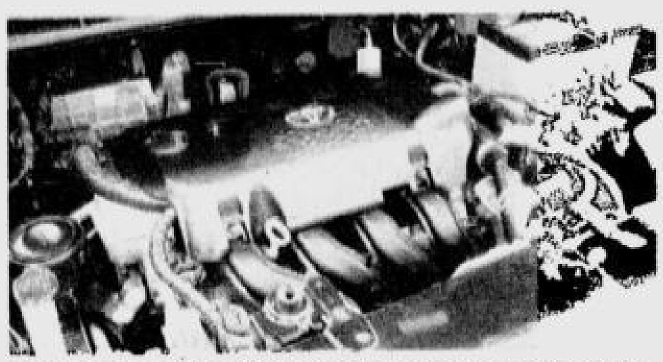
Aside from a trophy, Salazar also received P40,000 cash.

Joining Salazar in this year's edition of the Henry Ford Awards were Business Mirror's Edward Simon (Best Published Photograph for Newspaper); Top Gear magazine's Jose Antonio Acosta (Best Published Photograph for Magazine); The Philippine Star's Manny de los Reyes (Best Auto Test Drive/Auto Event Story); www.motioncars.com's Ulysses Ang (Best Automotive Online Feature); Top Gear magazine's Jason Ang (Best Motoring Column Issue); People's Journal's Junep Ocampo (Best Environment and Conservation Feature); Auto Review TV program (Best Safety Feature); Hotwire TV program (Best Automotive TV Feature); The Manila Times' Vernon Sarne (Best Automotive Industry Feature); Manila Bulletin's Myrna Velasco (Best Ford Feature); C! Magazine's Vince Pornelos (Best Mazda Feature); and Business Mirror (Best Motoring Section).

Now on its 7th year, the Henry Ford Award is given to individuals and organizations who have exemplified excellence in automotive reporting.

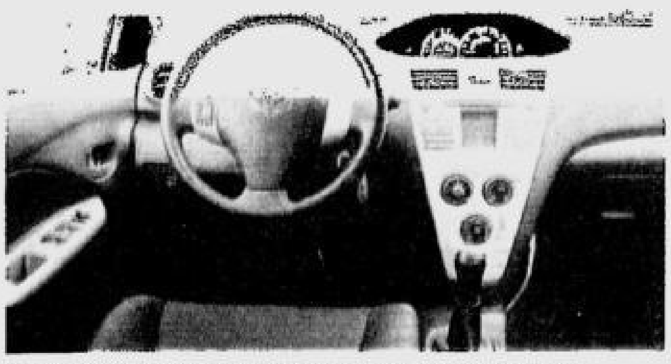
Salazar has been a past winner of this award, winning three (Best Auto Innovation Story, Best Auto Industry Story, and Best Auto Event Story) in 2003.

In 2001, she won the Best Auto Innovation/Auto Event Story for her "Get rid of the blind spot for safe driving" story.



THE VIOS' engine, whether 1.5, or 1.3 liter, is enhanced with VVT-i technology

PHOTOS BY AIDA SEVILLA MENDOZA



INSIDE THE 1.5G MT Vios, Optitron meters and a centrally mounted instrument panel

The best-selling passenger car of 2007

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

NEXT TO THE INNOVA, THE VIOS is Toyota Motor Philippines' (TMP) best-selling vehicle with sales averaging 800 units a month this year, up from 700 monthly in the first eight months of 2005. Introduced in Southeast Asian countries in 2003, the Vios, also known as the Belta in Japan, went global after its successful Asian debut and was launched in the United States as the Yaris sedan in 2006.

In 2005, the Vios won the Best Subcompact Car of the Year Award in the Car Awards Group Inc.'s (Cagi) Car of the Year Philippines program. Last year, the 2006 Vios gained the distinction of being the best-selling passenger car in the country.

Improving a highly successful product is a tall order, but somehow Toyota's engineers may have swung it. The 2007 Vios, unveiled at the 1st Philippine International Motor Show last March and launched on the market last July, looks headed for a 1,000 units-a-month sales target despite its higher price. TMP offers the new Vios with either a 1.5-liter or a 1.3-liter engine, automatic (AT) or manual transmission (MT). Like the Innova, the Vios is assembled at TMP's Santa Rosa, Laguna plant.

Winning combination

Perhaps the reason behind the Vios' success is its winning combination of pizzazz, economy and reliability. Ab initio, the Vios captured the imagination of car buffs as a fun-to-drive, well-engineered, durable small sedan—thanks to its sporty attitude and Toyota's reputation as a manufacturer of good-quality, dependable mass market cars.

The nimble handling and flat, stable cornering characteristics of the Vios as experienced by test drivers and delighted buyers confirmed the fun-to-drive image. In the 2007 edition, Toyota has wisely retained the front MacPherson struts, rear torsion beam suspension and stabilizer that are key to the Vios' agility and road grip.

Ditto the spunky 1.5-liter, 16-valve DOHC VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing-intelligent) engine in the G grade that is mated to either a gate-type 4-speed AT with Super ECT or a smooth-shifting 5-speed MT (it was the latter that I test-drove.) Max output is rated at 107 hp/6,000 rpm and 142 Nm/4,200 rpm max torque. Disc brakes on all four 15-inch alloy wheels supply adequate stopping power.

THE 2007 Vios is taller and has a new chassis and a longer wheelbase.

Changes

Although the horsepower and final peak torque figures remain the same on paper, Toyota has reportedly made changes to the intake exhaust and ECU programming of the Vios G to improve the low to mid-level torque. The longer wheelbase and lower ground clearance further enhance on-road stability.

With its balanced power to weight ratio, the 1.5 Vios can 0 from zero to 100 kilometer per hour (kph) in a respectable (for a 107-hp car) 11.81 seconds. More important, the '07 Vios is fuel-frugal, averaging 18 km per liter in a 411-km economy run recently in Thailand. Despite its compact size, the Vios remains relatively comfortable and quiet during long trips due to numerous insulators in many portions of the car and the fact that its engine is slightly quieter than a high-rev engine like the competitor's VTEC. Curved surface panels and reinforcements for the front floor reduce body vibration.

More room

The longer wheelbase translates into increased interior length and interior height for more passenger room. The rear floor is flat, adding to the back seat occupants' comfort quotient. While the new Vios is 25 mm taller than the previous edition, it is longer and more aerodynamically efficient.

The front grille, front bumper and multireflector headlamps of the Vios remind one of the Camry. In the G variant (P765,000 for the AT, P730,000 for MT), the turn signal lamps integrated in the side-view mirrors, a printed antenna and rear reflectors are the new external features.

The overall cabin design resembles the Yaris with a centrally located V-shaped metallic console and Optitron gauges atop the middle of the dash. A Multi-Information Display, an in-dash CD and MP3 stereo, a three-spoke leather steering wheel with audio controls, three cupholders and storage spaces galore complete the interior picture.

Volume

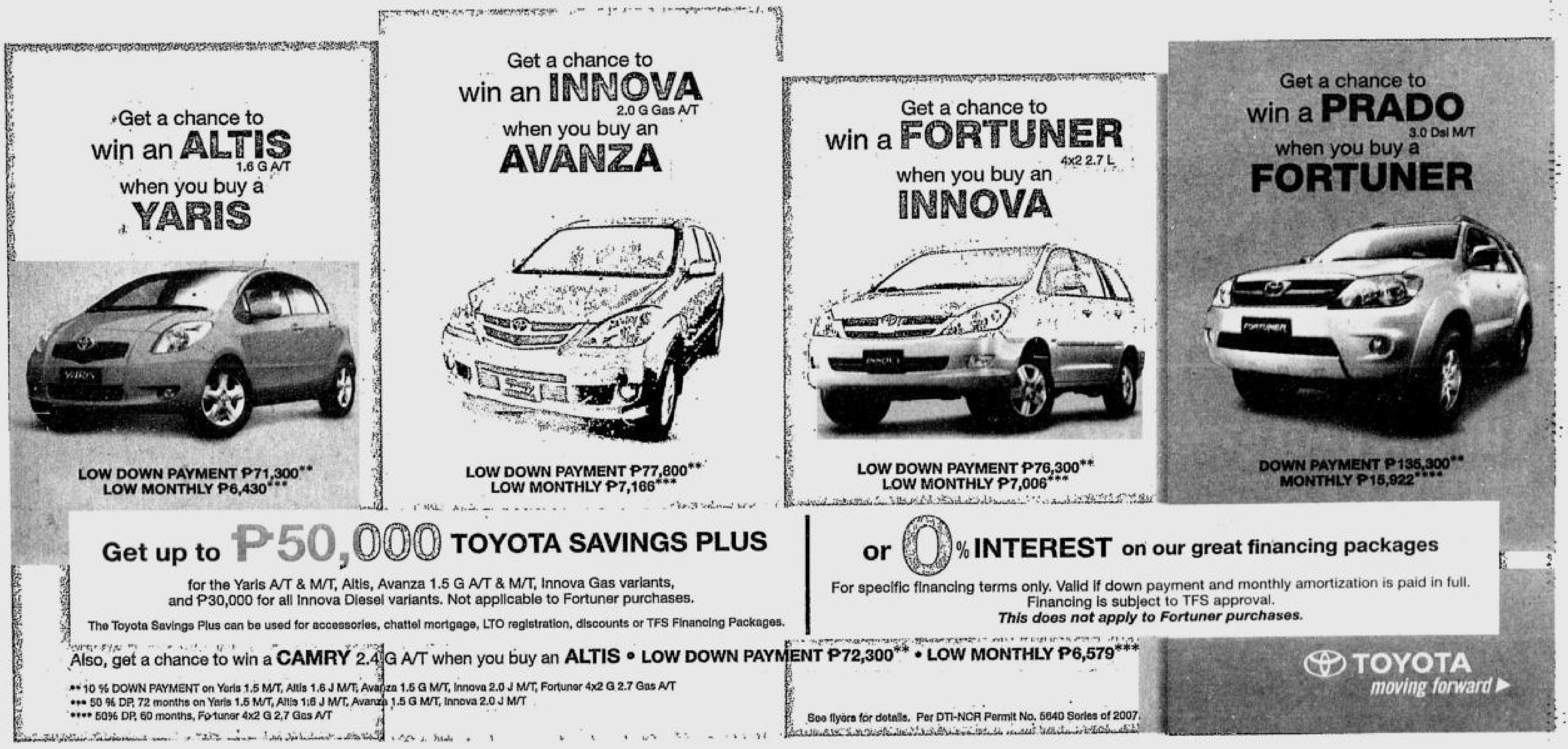
The trunk volume has been increased by 75 liters to 475 liters. Luggage space can be expanded by folding flat the 60/40 split rear bench. Since the trunk opening is relatively low, loading items is easier.

Dual front SRS airbags are standard equipment for the Vios G together with ABS, EBD, Brake Assist and keyless entry with alarm system. As in all Toyota vehicles, the Vios has a GOA (Global Outstanding Assessment) safety body, a reinforced cabin with side-impact beams plus front and rear 3-point ELR seatbelts with pretensioner and force limiter for the driver and front seat passenger.

Given all the above and the soaring price of gasoline, do you still wonder why the Vios is the best-selling car in the Philippines?

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: No matter where you go, you're there.



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**** 50% DP, 60 months, Fortuner 4x2 G 2.7 Gas A/T

See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5640 Series of 2007.

TOYOTA
moving forward

THE NEW Alterra promises more comfortable ride for its occupants.

Isuzu's Alterra upgrades for the holiday season

By Charles E. Buban

FOR A LOT OF FILIPINO motorists, nothing beats a comfortable cabin whose amenities are much appreciated during long drives or while caught in a traffic jam.

"This is why for 2008, we decided to make the Alterra even more comfortable for the driver as well as the passengers," said Keith Takeda, Isuzu Philippines president.

Chief among these upgrades is the new JVC (AVX33) entertainment system that features a 3.5-inch monitor, Dolby digital decoder, a 180-watt subwoofer at the back, iPod connectivity, and 5.1-channel digital surround speaker system.

The new entertainment system has a dual-zone feature that will allow front seat occupants to enjoy their preferred music while those at the back may listen to different music or even watch DVD.

Hands-free cellphone use

It also has a Bluetooth function that will allow the vehicle's occupants to use their cellphones hands-free.

"This means more safety for the driver if he or she really needs to take the call while driving," Takeda said.

Indeed, safety is enhanced with the 2008 Alterra as IPC incorporated a reverse-assist camera mounted at the vehicle's rear spoiler.

The images captured by the camera are fed into the dash monitor so the driver will have additional assistance when backing up in tight parking slots or be warned if there is someone or something at the rear.

"The side mirrors are now classier with its European-themed design. More significantly, these mirrors are now power-folding for added convenience when navigating narrow spaces. The driver's side view is also equipped with a wide-angle mirror for better visibility," Takeda explained.

Keyless entry

He added that the 2008 Alterra also comes with a transmitter-integrated key that allows keyless entry—a feature normally found on high-end luxury vehicles.

The 2008 Alterra is still powered by a 3.0-liter common-rail direct-injection turbodiesel engine (144 horsepower and 294 Newton meters of torque) mated to either a four-speed automatic or five-speed manual transmission.

Takeda said this engine is more fuel-efficient and more environment-friendly.

"We wish to reward our loyal customers with a much improved 2008 Alterra. We believe that with this package, IPC will be able to have more satisfied motorists on the road whatever challenges they may encounter along their way," Takeda said.

The 2008 Alterra is available in 4x2 manual (P1.490 million for the monotone/two-tone variant and P1.5 million for the pearl color variant; the 4x2 automatic (P1.545 million for the monotone/two-tone variant and P1.555 million for the pearl color variant); and the 4x4 automatic (P1.673 million for the monotone/two-tone variant and P1.683 million for the pearl color variant).

TRANSPORT TRIVIA

By Emman Cena

Envirofit's retrofitting

NOT ONLY DOES PLANTING TREES could make the green makeover.

In a move to save fuel and fight pollution, a technology known as retrofitting has been done in the cities of Vigan and Puerto Princesa by the Envirofit, a non-profit organization.

Dubbed as Envirofit retrofit, the kit enables a cleaner, direct-injection alternative that can improve air quality by reducing hydrocarbon emissions by 90 percent, carbon monoxide emissions by 70 percent, and particulate emissions (smoke) by 80 percent.

How does the kit work? According to hero.com, the carburetor is replaced with an injector. Originally developed for snowmobiles, the direct injection technology of the kits has been adapted so that the retrofit system eliminates the carburetor and fuel is instead introduced directly into the engine cylinder, thus conserving more unburned fuel.

According to Envirofit, the kits could cut fuel consumption from 35 to 50 percent and decrease the emissions of a two-stroke engine—translating to not only reduced pollution but also cost-savings for ordinary taxi-drivers.

Aside from the Philippines, the technology is also used in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and other parts of South Asia. The Asian Development Bank estimates there are some 100 million two-stroke vehicles in Southeast Asia.

In June, the retrofit kit project received recognition in clean transport and mobility from the World Clean Energy Awards in Basel, Switzerland.

References: http://www.treehugger.com, http://www.blueegg.com, http://www.envirofit.org

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Promo has been extended until Dec. 31, 2007. Approved by DTI-NCR Permit no. 3373. Series of 2007.

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2bU! Christmas scrapbook

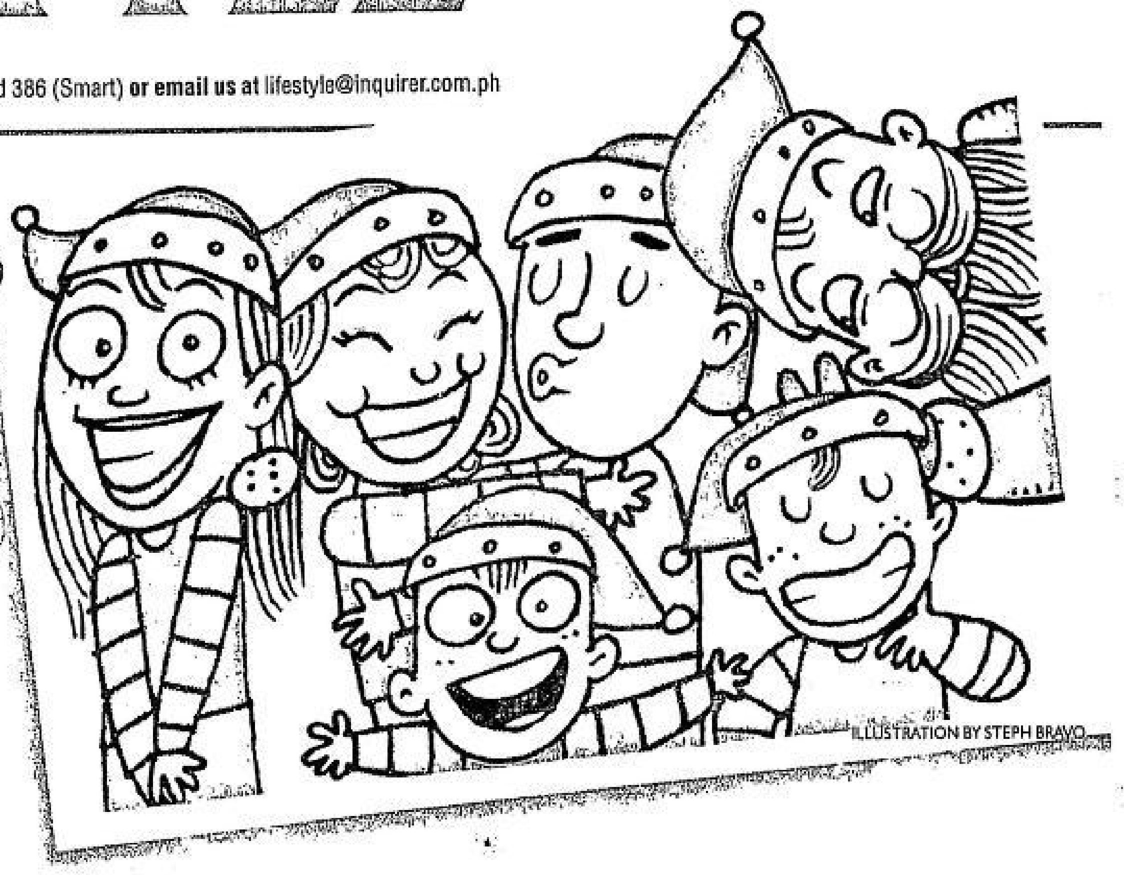
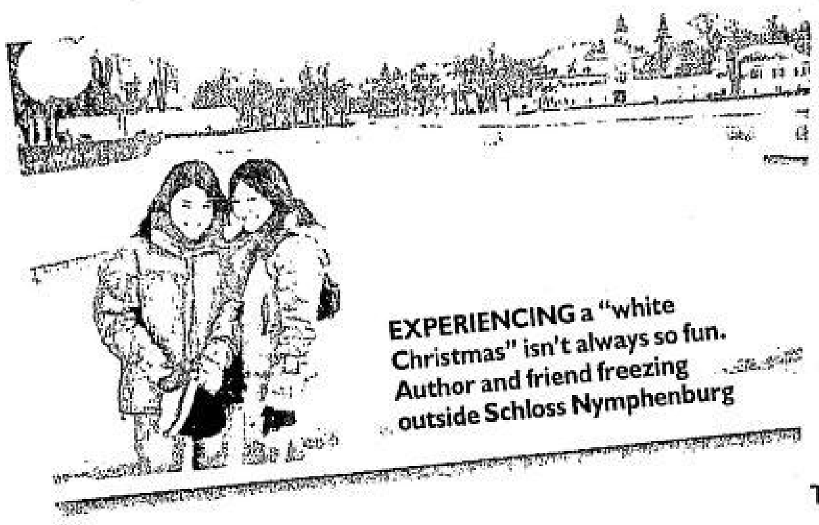


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Let the spirit of the season take over! Enjoy this collection of the best Yuletide memories in photographs, essays, journal entries, poems, stories from the staff of 2bU!, our friends and our readers!

Christmas is where the heart is


EXPERIENCING a "white Christmas" isn't always so fun. Author and friend freezing outside Schloss Nymphenburg

THE AUTHOR with her family at home after opening their presents

Text and photos by Cheryl Tiu
2bU! Correspondent

It does not matter where you are. What's important is who you're with

I LOVE CHRISTMAS. IT IS my favorite celebration of the year. I love how the city lights up with pretty decor, how Christmas carols echo festively throughout shopping malls, and how various establishments have Christmas trees and Nativity sets on display to honor the birth of Christ.

Every year, my holidays are spent with my family in Manila. Our Christmas tree is up on the first day of December. We hang lights and wreaths around our living room, play Christmas songs on our radio and join in on the Christmas-shopping rush to buy presents for family and friends.

On Dec. 24, the Tiu clan gathers at my Auntie Linda's house for our annual Christmas Eve dinner. She prepares the most scrumptious fare every year, which we all devour in no time. Before midnight, we head home to open our presents under the tree.

On Christmas Day, my family wakes up early to go to Mass. We spend lunch with my mother's side, the Alandy Dy's, at a Chinese restaurant. In the evening, the seven of us in my immediate family dine together at home or in a restaurant. This is our Christmas tradition each year and it is one that I truly enjoy.

White Christmas

I have to admit though that I have always dreamed of a white Christmas. Ever since I was young, I had always wondered what it was like to spend Christmas overseas, particularly at a destination dressed in snow, where I could throw snowballs and make snow angels.

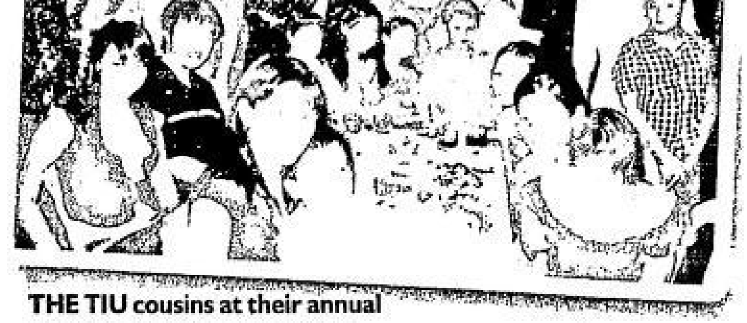
Last 2005, it happened.

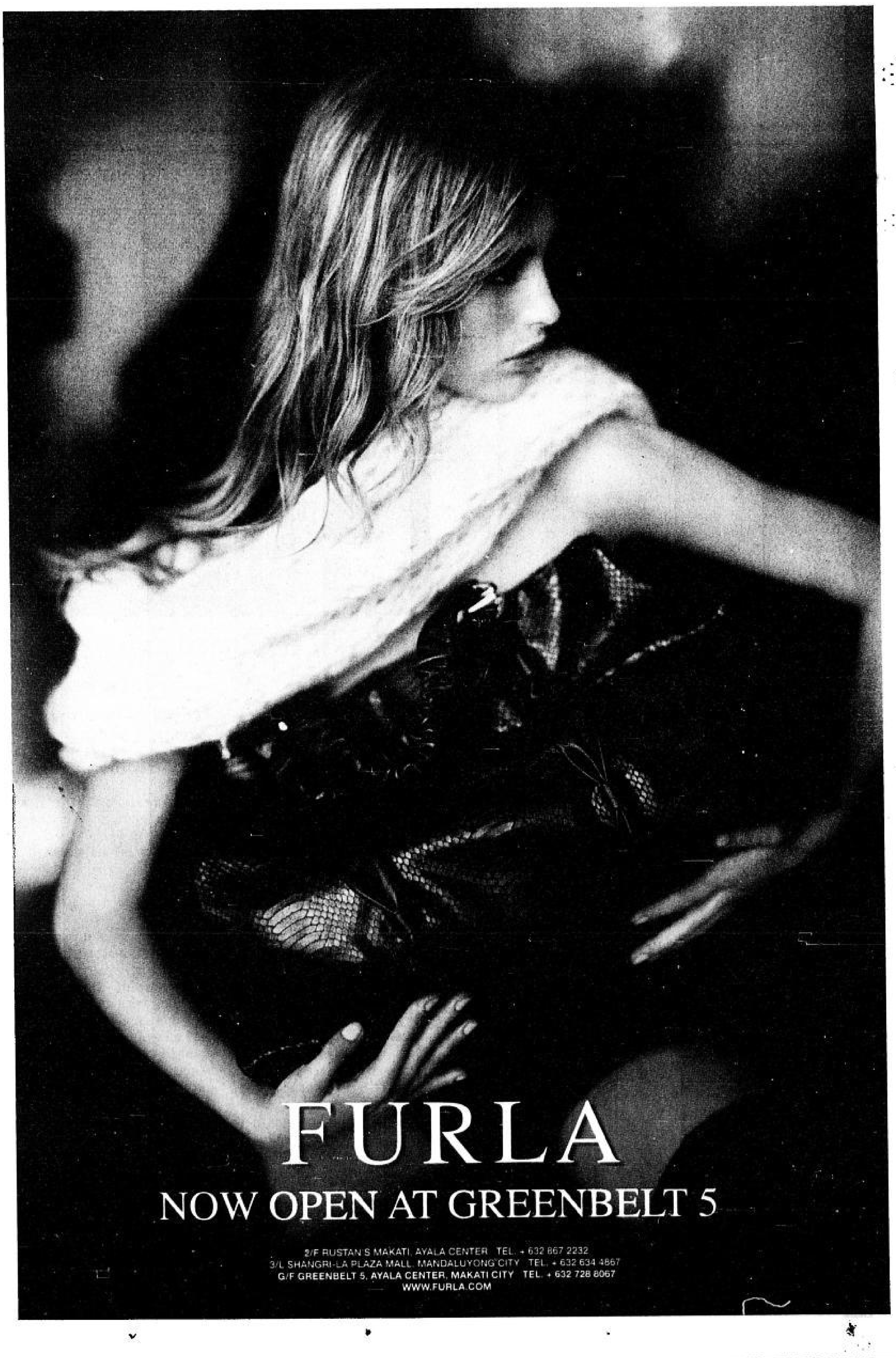
After my exchange program semester in Angers, France, I decided to spend the holidays in the continent with my friends, Aimee and Barbie, before going home to Manila.

I had planned a circular two-week itinerary where we'd hop through seven cities beginning from Paris going

CHRISTMAS IS WHERE/ C3

WITH close friends Aimee and Barbie, making the most of exploring a pretty (yet empty) Strasbourg on Christmas day


THE TIU cousins at their annual Christmas Eve dinner in 2006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Rediscovering Christmas

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

By Jamie Tecson

THEY SAY THAT YOU ARE NEVER TOO old to be a kid again, and that it is never too late to try to be one. When we become adults, many things about us change. From our physical appearances to the way we think, everything changes. Our dreams in life become more realistic, unlike when we were children. Then, the sky was the limit and the more surreal, the better.

When I was a child, the Christmas holiday was my favorite holiday of the year. I would write letters to Santa asking for my favorite toys as gifts. I would even design my letter with drawings, just so I'd be sure that Santa would give me a nice toy.

When Christmas morning came, I would be the first to run down to where the Christmas stockings were. I saw every gift like it was a gift from the heavens. I would run my fingers through the smooth surface of the Christmas wrapper and then rip it open, savoring every crispy sound it made. That would be my sign of appreciation and excitement. Every gift, whether big or small, I would name as my new favorite.

When I was 10, I stopped writing letters to Santa. I guess you could say I outgrew the habit. And last year, I felt that Christmas did not have that same thrill anymore. I felt empty inside, like there was a hole somewhere inside of me.

I was celebrating with family, I received gifts from relatives and friends. But why could not I shake off the feeling that something was missing?

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I decided to open some gifts after the celebration. To be honest, I have judged some gifts by the way they were wrapped and how large or small they were. I'd carefully peel off the wrapper, take a peek at the gift inside, and decide right then and there whether I'd keep the gift or not.

Doing this again, I realized at that moment that I had nobody but myself to blame for losing the spirit of Christmas.

As we grow older, we learn to expect too much from people. As we open each present we receive on Christmas day and find out that it is not the one we want, we judge the people who gave us those gifts. If we don't like their presents, we think they are being cheap or are lousy gift-givers.

We don't realize it, but we lose our Christmas spirit this way.

Lately, I've been wishing that I were a child again. I would like to revisit the thrill of waiting for the clock to strike midnight, the excitement of opening a present without thinking whether it would be nice or ugly, the dream that I would get a glimpse of Santa Claus even though I never did.

I would like to make each moment matter to me and appreciate every little thing, whether good or bad, that happens.

I think I'll wake up early on Christmas day this year and rush down to my presents. I will probably sit on the floor and grab the first gift that I see. And no, I will not carefully peel them open, but rip the wrapper off to my heart's content.

Afterwards, I will be thankful for every present that comes my way.

Envelopmental gift-giving

Text and photo by Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

MY LOVELY *LOLA* ALWAYS had this tradition of letting me wrap her gifts as early as November. One yuletide season several years ago, she got tired of it and realized how it was so much easier to just hand out cash-filled envelopes.

And so by the first few weeks of December (she no longer needed to rush), she'd ask me to buy those red Chinese envelopes to use for her Christmas gifts.

In 2003, when I first started to bring my girlfriend to our family Christmas Day lunch, my grandmother handed me one of her red Chinese envelopes, addressed to me and my girlfriend, Bunny.

It had a lovely dedication handwritten by my grandmother, who suffered from a stroke when she was younger, got her right side paralyzed and since then had to do things using the left side of her body, including writing.

We instantly extracted the bills, added them to our wallets, and included the red envelope in our scrapbook.

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Dedication

In 2005, my grandma asked me to write her dedications on the red envelopes. I was, of course, glad to help although it felt a little weird writing her dedication for Bunny and me.

It was even weirder when on Christmas Day itself, she handed me an envelope with a dedication I myself wrote. That year, due to hard times, the amount of the money inside was even less than the previous year's. And so Bunny and I taped the red envelope—complete with the money inside—in our scrapbook. I appreciated how my grandmother was giving us so much even if she didn't have a job and times were hard.

In the middle of 2006, I had my own hard times in the finance department. There were several times when I took out the bills from the red envelope and put it in my wallet for reserve.

One day, I had no choice but to spend the money. It broke my heart to finally use it, after stopping myself for so long. I was guilty about spending it, but I felt a little better knowing I used it on something I really needed and that I used it only when I was left with no other choice.

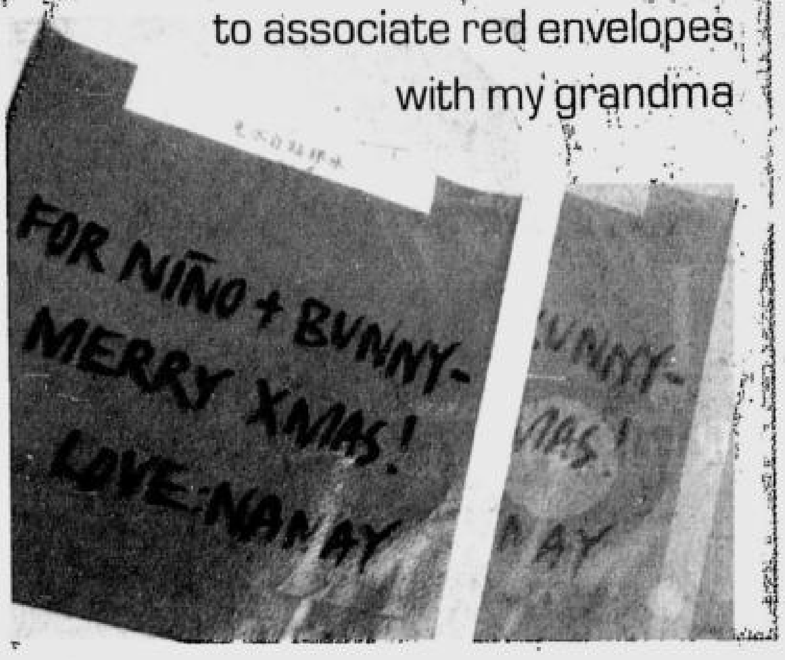
In Christmas 2006, my grandma totally scrapped the whole envelope idea and just handed us cash.

Christmas is just around the corner like a 7-Eleven. My grandmother hasn't asked me to buy her red envelopes or write her dedications yet, but I'm not really waiting for that.

I've been busy hunting for the best-looking red envelope for my grandmother this Christmas. This year, I'm the one giving her a red envelope. A really thick one packed with bills and lots of unconditional love from her grandson.

E-mail the author at ninomarksablan@yahoo.com.

I have learned to associate red envelopes with my grandma



FOR NIÑO + BUNNY-
MERRY XMAS!
LOVE-NANAY

Five pathetic things I associate with Christmas

By Camille Asuncion

EVERYONE SAYS CHRISTMAS IS THE time of the year that gets everyone giddy and excited, that makes everything more cheerful and cozier than usual.

For others, Christmas magnifies how sad their life really is. If things seem dark on a normal day, it is bound to suck a hundred times more during the holiday.

But the Christmas season has not brought out the perky or the suicidal in me. It is the time that brings out my inner geek.

1. When I was only 7 years old, I was excited to buy gifts for everyone, although my allowance was only P20 pesos a day. I remember the first Christmas present I gave—it was for my mom.

I got her this metallic pink My-Gel sign pen from the boutique in school. I remember feeling so proud when I handed it to her after Noche Buena, untidily wrapped in Hallmark paper and taped.

Five years later, my grandfather gave me a compilation of all our home videos. I was caught on tape bragging to everyone how that sign pen cost me the large sum of P30.

2. I remember how my cousins and I started our tradition of going Christmas shopping together. It all started when we were eight years old. We all walked to the *sari-sari* store in their village.

Once there, we got our moms rose-printed vinyl tote bags that were just too perfect. We never saw them again after we handed them out. We could not find anything manly enough for our dads in the *sari-sari* store, so we decided to get them silver picture frames with naked angels all over them. They turned out to be just as perfect as the totes.

We spent the next four years going Christmas shopping together at Glorietta. Our tastes have evolved, obviously.

3. Once, we spent the holidays in California. I claimed to have seen Santa on his sleigh pulled by his reindeer over our swimming pool.

No one believed me, but up to now, I still have a clear picture of that scene and I can still remember how his ho-ho-ho sounded.

4. Through the years, Christmas just seemed to suck more and more. I could no longer feel the cheer of the Christmas carols being played everywhere. If back then I would start to feel the Christmas spirit around early November, now I barely feel it even just a week before Christmas Day.

When I started to realize that I was not going to get enormous piles of presents to rip open anymore, I started wrapping my own pocket books and putting them under the tree, in an attempt to make it look like I had more gifts than I really did.

Last year, I did not even get the chance to attend a single Simbang Gabi. The one I went to on Christmas Eve did not really count.

5. This year, the only thing that makes it feel like Christmas is the race to get a Starbucks planner. Every weekend, I try my best to finish two lattes or two Frappucinos per visit.

This has seriously strained my allowance, even though it has already been raised to P150 a day. But I find the challenge to be worthwhile.

I do not care if there is a major traffic jam on the way to Starbucks Libis. I do not care that I have spent over a thousand bucks on coffee in November.

It seems that the only words that can spark my memory of a good season are Praline Mocha, Toffee Nut and Peppermint Mocha.

CHECK out Triassic Tag, one of the park's latest attractions, for some thrills.

RYAN FERNANDEZ

Family fun and games

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

WHILE THERE ARE carnivals all over the city, there is still good reason—12, actually—to head all the way to Sta. Rosa, Laguna to visit Enchanted Kingdom, the country's largest theme park.

"Christmas is a time for memories," said Mario Mamon, president and chair of Enchanted Kingdom.

"We want to help people make new memories by providing them with reasons to come here to the park."

Enchanted Kingdom, now celebrating its 12th anniversary, is offering 12 attractions this holiday season. Reduced entrance fee, new rides, stores, performers, and competitions, among others, await the park's visitors this month.

Whether you are young or old, male or female, energetic or not, you will surely find something in store for you at the park.

Children will love SpongeBob SquarePants the Ride, now showing at the Rialto Theater, while teens should have a blast trying out Triassic Tag, a laser-gun war game that will have you ducking behind bushes and walls to escape from your opponents.

For fence-sitters, too

For those who prefer to stay on the sidelines watching the action, check out Oliver's High Dive Show that features a group of European high divers performing a variety of life-threatening stunts.

Want something more whimsical? Watch magician Lou Hilario in action as he pulls some tricks out of his hat—or sleeve.

If you are looking for some good, clean fun, nothing can be more wholesome than The Bloomfields, who will be performing at the park on Dec. 29—their take on '60s music is refreshing and energetic, without being old-fashioned (finally, a band that teenagers can watch with their parents without cringing).

After that, popular OPM Bamboo will rock the stage on Dec. 30.

However, if you are really itching to watch holiday performances, catch the Christmas play by theater group Trumpets Dec. 23, 25, 27 and 28, as well as various performances from choral groups.

Visit www.enchantedkingdom.com.ph.

All the lonely people

By Patricia Abigail C. Lim

MEREDITH GREY (OF THE television show "Grey's Anatomy") once said, "40 years ago, The Beatles asked the world a question. They wanted to know where all the lonely people in the world came from. My theory is that a great many of the lonely people come from hospitals. As doctors, we ignore our needs so we can meet our patients' needs. We ignore friends and families so we can save other people's friends and families."

She is probably right. Or, at least partially.

Christmas is always a big deal for Filipinos. It is the day we forget our diets and eat everything high in cholesterol. It is the day we reveal our hidden talents in singing and dancing to our biggest fans—our families.

It is the day we forget that we have not paid our electric bill and that we might need to use candles the next day. It is the day we put aside the urge to throw plates at one another.

After all it is Christ's birthday. It is the day we spend with our loved ones.

At least for some of us.

Lonely Christmas

A few years back I spent my first Christmas without my mom. She had to stay in the hospital as she was the resident doctor on duty that time.

It was my first Christmas without loud music or Christmas carols. It was the first Christmas that I slept early. That Christmas, I listened to people greet families and friends over the radio.

I wished that, even just for that day, all the sick people would get well so my mom could go home.

I am used to her being out most of the time, but not on Christmas Day.

Though we could celebrate on the 24th or 26th and there are other holidays, why is it such a big deal when we are not together during Christmas? Why do we feel lonelier?

Maybe because we see, we feel, we know that a lot of people are celebrating and are having the time of their lives. So the longing gets stronger and the pain of not being together lingers.

Meredith concluded, "Which means that at the end of the day, all we really have is ourselves and nothing can make you feel lonelier than that."

It is indeed a sad thing when all you have is yourself; it is a disaster to be alone on CHristmas Day. Thankfully, my family only experienced that once.

But many Filipino families—parents, husbands, wives, children of overseas Filipino workers, soldiers and doctors—are not as lucky.

Who are the lonely people in the world? They are the people who have to content themselves with gifts, phone calls or greeting cards on Christmas Day, wishing that these can ease the pain of being alone.

Rediscovering Christmas

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

By Jamie Tecson

THEY SAY THAT YOU ARE NEVER TOO old to be a kid again, and that it is never too late to try to be one. When we become adults, many things about us change. From our physical appearances to the way we think, everything changes. Our dreams in life become more realistic, unlike when we were children. Then, the sky was the limit and the more surreal, the better.

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Text and photo
by Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

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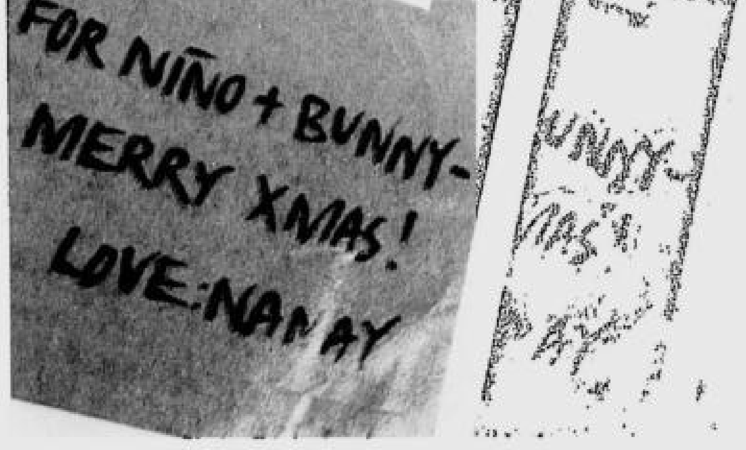

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By Camille Asuncion

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For others, Christmas magnifies how sad their life really is. If things seem dark on a normal day, it is bound to suck a hundred times more during the holiday.

But the Christmas season has not brought out the perky or the suicidal in me. It is the time that brings out my inner geek.

1. When I was only 7 years old, I was excited to buy gifts for everyone, although my allowance was only P20 pesos a day. I remember the first Christmas present I gave—it was for my mom.

I got her this metallic pink My-Gel sign pen from the boutique in school. I remember feeling so proud when I handed it to her after Noche Buena, untidily wrapped in Hallmark paper and taped.

Five years later, my grandfather gave me a compilation of all our home videos. I was caught on tape bragging to everyone how that sign pen cost me the large sum of P30.

2. I remember how my cousins and I started our tradition of going Christmas shopping together. It all started when we were eight years old. We all walked to the *sari-sari* store in their village.

Once there, we got our moms rose-printed vinyl tote bags that were just too perfect. We never saw them again after we handed them out. We could not find anything manly enough for our dads in the *sari-sari* store, so we decided to get them silver picture frames with naked angels all over them. They turned out to be just as perfect as the totes.

We spent the next four years going Christmas shopping together at Glorietta. Our tastes have evolved, obviously.

3. Once, we spent the holidays in California. I claimed to have seen Santa on his sleigh pulled by his reindeer over our swimming pool.

No one believed me, but up to now, I still have a clear picture of that scene and I can still remember how his ho-ho-ho sounded.

4. Through the years, Christmas just seemed to suck more and more. I could no longer feel the cheer of the Christmas carols being played everywhere. If back then I would start to feel the Christmas spirit around early November, now I barely feel it even just a week before Christmas Day.

When I started to realize that I was not going to get enormous piles of presents to rip open anymore, I started wrapping my own pocket books and putting them under the tree, in an attempt to make it look like I had more gifts than I really did.

Last year, I did not even get the chance to attend a single Simbang Gabi. The one I went to on Christmas Eve did not really count.

5. This year, the only thing that makes it feel like Christmas is the race to get a Starbucks planner. Every weekend, I try my best to finish two lattes or two Frappucinos per visit.

This has seriously strained my allowance, even though it has already been raised to P150 a day. But I find the challenge to be worthwhile.

I do not care if there is a major traffic jam on the way to Starbucks Libis. I do not care that I have spent over a thousand bucks on coffee in November.

It seems that the only words that can spark my memory of a good season are Praline Mocha, Toffee Nut and Peppermint Mocha.

CHECK out Triassic Tag, one of the park's latest attractions, for some thrills.

RYAN FERNANDEZ

Family fun and games

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

WHILE THERE ARE carnivals all over the city, there is still good reason—12, actually—to head all the way to Sta. Rosa, Laguna to visit Enchanted Kingdom, the country's largest theme park.

"Christmas is a time for memories," said Mario Mamon, president and chair of Enchanted Kingdom.

"We want to help people make new memories by providing them with reasons to come here to the park."

Enchanted Kingdom, now celebrating its 12th anniversary, is offering 12 attractions this holiday season. Reduced entrance fee, new rides, stores, performers, and competitions, among others, await the park's visitors this month.

Whether you are young or old, male or female, energetic or not, you will surely find something in store for you at the park.

Children will love SpongeBob SquarePants the Ride, now showing at the Rialto Theater, while teens should have a blast trying out Triassic Tag, a laser-gun war game that will have you ducking behind bushes and walls to escape from your opponents.

For fence-sitters, too

For those who prefer to stay on the sidelines watching the action, check out Oliver's High Dive Show that features a group of European high divers performing a variety of life-threatening stunts.

Want something more whimsical? Watch magician Lou Hilario in action as he pulls some tricks out of his hat—or sleeve.

If you are looking for some good, clean fun, nothing can be more wholesome than The Bloomfields, who will be performing at the park on Dec. 29—their take on '60s music is refreshing and energetic, without being old-fashioned (finally, a band that teenagers can watch with their parents without cringing).

After that, popular OPM Bamboo will rock the stage on Dec. 30.

However, if you are really itching to watch holiday performances, catch the Christmas play by theater group Trumpets Dec. 23, 25, 27 and 28, as well as various performances from choral groups.

Visit www.enchantedkingdom.com.ph

All the lonely people

By Patricia Abigail C. Lim

MEREDITH GREY (OF THE television show "Grey's Anatomy") once said, "40 years ago, The Beatles asked the world a question. They wanted to know where all the lonely people in the world came from. My theory is that a great many of the lonely people come from hospitals. As doctors, we ignore our needs so we can meet our patients' needs. We ignore friends and families so we can save other people's friends and families."

She is probably right. Or, at least partially.

Christmas is always a big deal for Filipinos. It is the day we forget our diets and eat everything high in cholesterol. It is the day we reveal our hidden talents in singing and dancing to our biggest fans—our families.

It is the day we forget that we have not paid our electric bill and that we might need to use candles the next day. It is the day we put aside the urge to throw plates at one another.

After all it is Christ's birthday. It is the day we spend with our loved ones.

At least for some of us.

Lonely Christmas

A few years back I spent my first Christmas without my mom. She had to stay in the hospital as she was the resident doctor on duty that time.

It was my first Christmas without loud music or Christmas carols. It was the first Christmas that I slept early. That Christmas, I listened to people greet families and friends over the radio.

I wished that, even just for that day, all the sick people would get well so my mom could go home.

I am used to her being out most of the time, but not on Christmas Day.

Though we could celebrate on the 24th or 26th and there are other holidays, why is it such a big deal when we are not together during Christmas? Why do we feel lonelier?

Maybe because we see, we feel, we know that a lot of people are celebrating and are having the time of their lives. So the longing gets stronger and the pain of not being together lingers.

Meredith concluded, "Which means that at the end of the day, all we really have is ourselves and nothing can make you feel lonelier than that."

It is indeed a sad thing when all you have is yourself; it is a disaster to be alone on CHristmas Day. Thankfully, my family only experienced that once.

But many Filipino families—parents, husbands, wives, children of overseas Filipino workers, soldiers and doctors—are not as lucky.

Who are the lonely people in the world? They are the people who have to content themselves with gifts, phone calls or greeting cards on Christmas Day, wishing that these can ease the pain of being alone.

Christmas is ...

From page C1

through Budapest and ending in Amsterdam.

For Christmas, it was the city of Strasbourg that beckoned us. I had read both online and in my Lonely Planet that it was a joyous city to spend Christmas in since it had a lot of Christmas markets and festivities. We were excited.

Disappointed

The three of us agreed we wanted our Christmas Eve dinner to be special. We wanted to spend it in a nice fancy restaurant where we could dress up a little bit and splurge on dishes we normally wouldn't on any other day.

The first French restaurant I called, which was highly recommended by my book, said it was closed for Christmas. Too bad, I was really looking forward to their foie gras, but it was okay, I still had five more to go.

I rang up the next French restaurant and it gave me the same answer. So did the third, the fourth, and the fifth!

By then, we were getting worried. We did not want to spend our Christmas Eve picking out of canned goods in our hostel rooms. The last recommended restaurant on my list was a Lebanese one, Au Cèdre. I went hysterical after that phone call—yes, they were open!

Not so white, after all

When we got to Strasbourg on Christmas Eve, we were greeted with darkness. Everything—including the Christmas market—was closed. Public transportation had ceased running so we had to walk to the restaurant which, luckily, was only 20 minutes away.

It was not snowing but it had just rained, therefore it was very cold, black... and sad. Asides from the three of us, there seemed to be nobody else on the streets of Strasbourg. Christmas lights that dangled from the closed shopping establishments and restaurants seemed to be our only glimmer of hope.

At least the restaurant managed to lift our spirits. Its colorful interiors and bright lights put smiles back on our faces. I had a hearty dinner of dried beef slices, spinach-stuffed pastries, grilled lamb cutlets, Lebanese flan with rose petals and pistachios, which I enjoyed with a carafe of Lebanese wine. It was a delightful meal and I was thankful to be in the company of two of my closest friends.

On Christmas day, we ambled along the streets of Strasbourg and used it as an opportunity to sight-see. The Christmas markets opened that afternoon and we shopped for souvenirs while munching gingerbread cookies and sipping vin chaud (hot wine). We went to Mass at the city's famous pink-sandstone cathedral, Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg, and walked around until we chanced upon the city's main Christmas tree on Place Kleber.

We then called it a night and retired to our hostel, missing our families back home.

My "white" Christmas came the day after in Munich, Germany. The entire city was drenched in snow and I realized it was... not so fun. The snowflakes that always looked so pretty on Christmas cards actually felt like pellets shooting at my eyes and forehead. It was annoying. I was freezing cold despite the layers of jackets and thermal clothing I had on. It wasn't a surprise then that I was diagnosed with fever that night.

True Christmas spirit

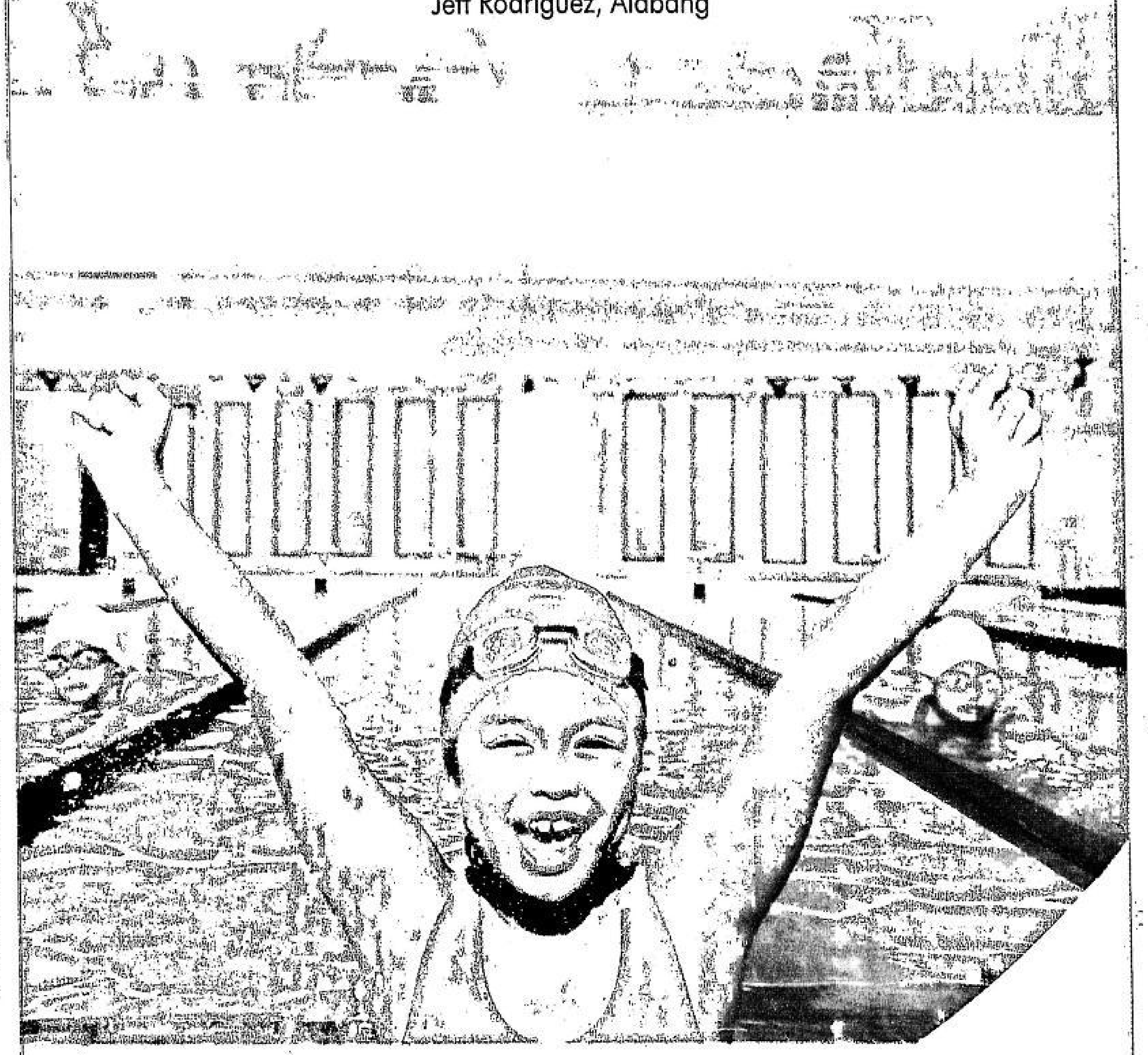
It was only after that experience when I realized the true spirit of Christmas belongs to being at home with your family and loved ones. Even if you're in the most exotic or gorgeous city in the world, it is being home with the family that still gives you a warm and tingly sensation in your heart.

Even my white Christmas experience made me thankful I had a sunny Christmas to look forward to in Manila every year.

I love traveling and I've always wished to live in various cities around the world. But for Christmas, there's nowhere I'd rather be but home with my family.

E-mail the author at chloe_dominique@yahoo.com

CHRISTMAS Eve in Strasbourg in 2005. Everything was closed save for the Christmas lights.



"My daughter is a special child in more ways than one."
Jeff Rodriguez, Alabang

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The Manila Doctors Hospital Child Neuroscience Center is a multi-disciplinary facility in a private hospital setting dedicated to giving quality care to children with special needs. The center takes a holistic approach offering affordable multi-specialty diagnostic and interventional services to patients, and support programs to families for them to cope with their children's special concerns in order to give them quality life.

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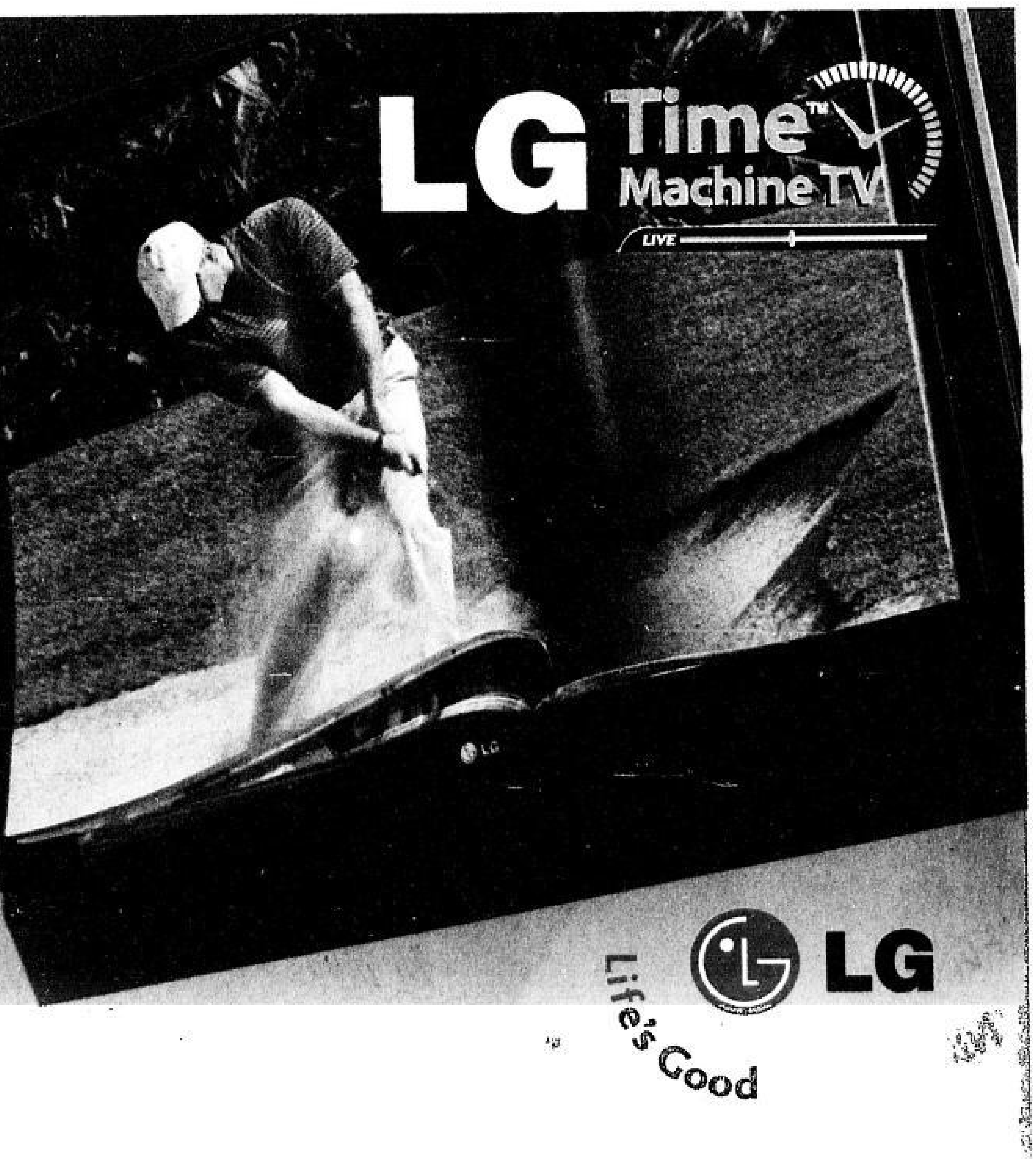

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The Great Christmas Filling

Sparkling Holidays at Dusit Hotel Nikko

CHRISTMAS IS THE MOST FESTIVE SEASON of the year. And the best way to celebrate it is with your family and friends at Dusit Hotel Nikko.

Enjoy and indulge on delectable dishes at the hotel's specialty restaurants made this Holiday season.

Be one of the first to dine at the newly renovated Benjarong Royal Thai restaurant and feast on your favorite Thai dishes. Savor masterfully prepared Holiday Specials by Chef Tun from Dec. 15 to 23. The five a la carte dishes highly recommended for the Holidays are: Tom Seab Sikrong Moo (pork spareribs in sour clear soup *i-san* style); See Da Chom Suan (pork in red curry with coconut milk and vegetables); Khao Yam Sarai (steamed rice salad with lemongrass, *kaffir* lime leaves and pomelo); Pla Bai Tong (baked boneless fish with red curry and herbs in banana leaves); Praram Phaeng Sron (king prawn stuffed with minced shrimp in green curry).

A four-course set dinner menu inclusive of one round of red or white wine is offered on Dec. 24 and 31 for only P1,500 nett per person at Benjarong Royal Thai restaurant.

The stylish Tosca offers an elegant holiday fete with its special menu prepared by Chef Alessio Loddo for the Yuletide Season. Savor authentic Italian dishes on Christmas Eve Dinner, Dec. 24 and partake of the delectable 5-course set menu with unlimited Prosecco wine for only P2,800 nett per person.

For New Year's Eve dinner on Dec. 31, a 6-course set menu is offered for dinner consisting of mouth-watering Italian dishes complemented with unlimited Prosecco wine at P3,070 nett per person. And on Christmas Day, Dec. 25 and New Year's Day, Jan. 1, 2008, Tosca offers diners a special brunch buffet with unlimited Prosecco wine priced at P1,350 nett per person.

The bustling all-day dining restaurant is the perfect venue for a lively celebration with a mouthwatering lineup of traditional holiday fare in a buffet spread offered for Christmas Eve dinner at P1,600 nett per person inclusive of unlimited iced tea or chilled juice and New Year's Eve Dinner at P1,800 nett per person, inclusive of free-flowing Prosecco sparkling wine

Christmas will never be complete without the traditional Filipino delicacies such as the Puto Bumbong and Bibingka offered during the Holidays. Various delectable preparations are available according to your liking from Dec. 1, 2007 to Jan. 6, 2008 at the hotel lobby.

Savor authentic Japanese cuisine at its finest at UMU. Avail of the special 7-course menu inclusive of a choice of a glass of red or white house wine during the "Kaiseki Night" on Dec. 24, Christmas Eve dinner and Dec. 31, New Year's Eve dinner for P2,500 nett per person.

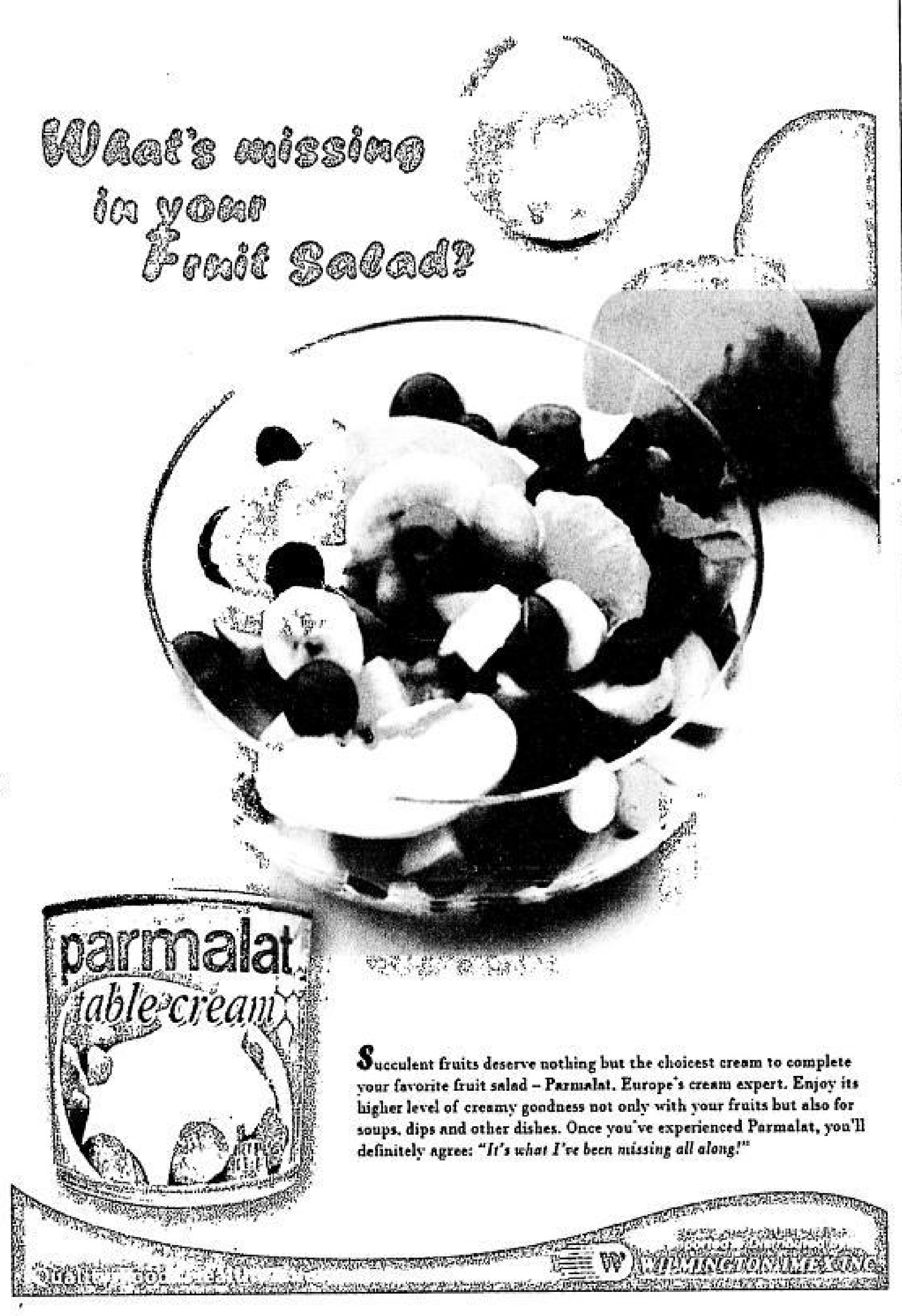
On Dec. 25, bring your family and friends for an a la carte lunch and dinner treat featuring the "Nihon Tsokusou Talabagani Kaki Wagyu Fair". Select from among the three preparations such as steamed or grilled Japanese Crab, Japanese Oyster and Wagyu Beef according to your preference.

Voted as the Best Filipino Restaurant by the readers of Philippine Tatler's "Philippines Best Restaurants," Fiesta San Miguel continues to satisfy diners with innovative and mouthwatering dishes.

Fiesta San Miguel lets you enjoy the festive season with its Filipino Christmas Eve Dinner Treat featuring a 5-course set menu offered on Dec. 24 for P1,230 nett per person only.

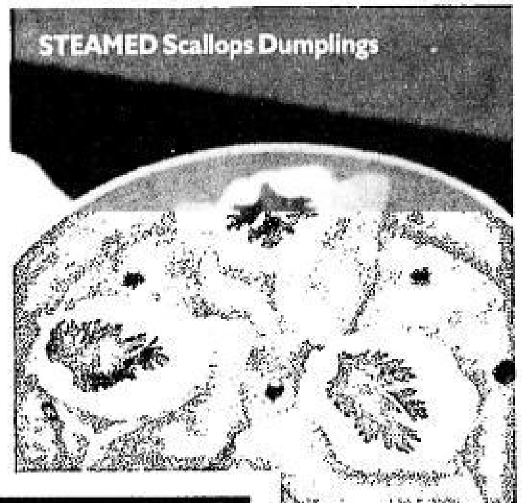
Celebrate the Holidays at Dusit Hotel Nikko and experience gracious hospitality at its best.

For inquiries and reservations, call 867-3333.



Succulent fruits deserve nothing but the choicest cream to complete your favorite fruit salad— Parmalat. Europe's cream expert. Enjoy its higher level of creamy goodness not onoy with your fruits but also for soups, dips and other dishes. Once you've experienced Parmalat, you'll definitely agree: 'It's what I've been missing all along!'

Succulent fruits deserve nothing but the choicest cream to complete your favorite fruit salad – Parmalat. Europe's cream expert. Enjoy its higher level of creamy goodness not only with your fruits but also for soups, dips and other dishes. Once you've experienced Parmalat, you'll definitely agree: *"It's what I've been missing all along!"*



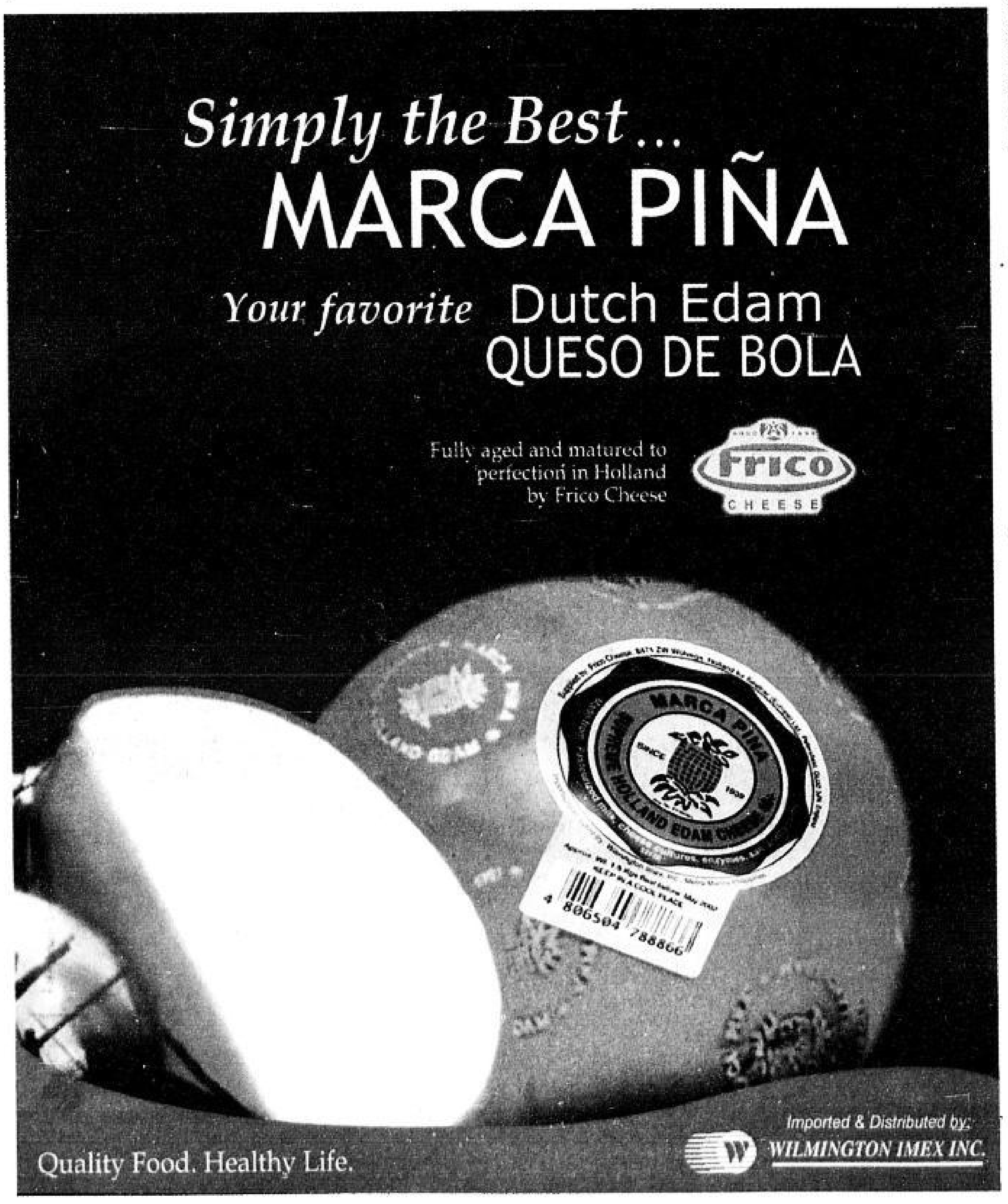
Cantonese celebration at Li Li brings HK to RP

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, CELEBRATE Christmas in grand Cantonese fashion as Li Li brings Hong Kong to your dining table.

On Dec. 24 and 25, Chef Choi works the wok for a special Imperial Christmas Dinner featuring unlimited appetizers, tasty fried rice, meat and vegetable dishes, the famous Double-Boiled Sea Conch and Quail Soup with Abalone and Bamboo Pith, plus six main entrées, all guaranteed to satisfy your appetite! If that's not enough, be awed by the Imperial Peking Duck carving station and enjoy all the duck you can eat. Then, satisfy your sweet tooth at the resplendent dessert buffet.

Make the evening even more festive with our free-flowing soft drinks, local beers, and red and white or sparkling wine, all available when you order Li Li's Imperial Christmas Dinner.

Li Li Chinese restaurant is located at the fifth level of Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila. For further inquiries and reservations, call 245-1234.



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SushiYa's party packages

WANT TO SURPRISE YOUR family and friends with an early Christmas treat?

Celebrate this special occasion by choosing from any five Party Packages starting at P250 per person, VAT inclusive and no service charge. This promo is not valid with other discounts and promos.

This offer is valid at SushiYa's eight outlets: Tomas Morato, Libis, SM Mega Mall, Robinsons Place Manila, Robinsons Galleria, Market! Market!, Westgate Alabang and SM City Pampanga. SushiYa—sushi, tempura, bento and more, is a healthy, affordable dining pleasure! It's now celebrating 10 sushi-yum years!

Join the Holiday Fun at Kalye Juan!

SHARE WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES the house specialty, Sisig sa Kalye—perfectly grilled pork with fresh onions, chicken liver and fresh peppers on a sizzling plate!

Match this with Bangus Kare-Kare, the popular Filipino dish that is a bestseller—the same yummy sauce with bangus belly strips!

A must try for the more adventurous is the Hito with *buro*—deep-fried or grilled hito wrapped in aluminum foil in a bed of mustard leaves. Complete this with a pampango delicacy, *buro*, which is fermented rice with fish, tomatoes and onions. Kalye Juan can be found at: CKB Building, Tomas Morato corner Scout Rallos (376-2508); GF, North Parking, SM Mall of Asia (556-0612)

Food delights for gatherings this Christmas

CHRISTMAS GATHERINGS are best shared with family and friends. The presence of loved ones, the happy conversations, the sharing of fun and laughter, plus the comfort and joy food brings make our Christmas more memorable and special.

For this season's special gatherings and reunions, you can check the following restaurants and savor what they offer:

DEC. 26 PLATTER
Celebrate the season with groovy and heavenly treats at Cocorama & Heaven 'N Eggs. You can try its Christmas food offerings like Christmas Omelet, Simbang Gabi Special Putobungbung pancake, and December 26 Platter. Also available is Rudolph's pancake, Fruit salad waffle and Grilled ensaymada sandwich. Heaven 'N Eggs Branches are in CKB Building in Tomas Morato, Quezon City (376-2674), Ground Floor Glorietta 4 (818-2792), Fuente Circle in Eastwood City (912-1172) and Market! Market! (889-3791) and Tri Noma Mall North Triangle, Quezon City (901-3608), and Cocorama, 6th floor, The Ledge, Shangri-La Plaza Mall in Mandaluyong City. It is the groovy café with a red-and-white Volkswagen kombi, mirror ball. For inquiries, call 910-0401.

SEAFOOD ESPADA COMBINATION
At Blackbeard's Seafood Island they offer a new seafood espada combination. Must try are bacon oysters fritters, balut sa aligue ala pobre, calle pirata, jumbo hito frito, panic buko seafood, pinaputok na tilapia, pomelo salad, seafood bonfire, seafood island chicken, Jamaican spicy wings, spicy crispy tadyang and streetfood sampler. Visit Blackbeard's at Eastwood City Libis, Fiesta Market! Market! Fort Bonifacio Global City and Shopwise Arcade, Araneta Center, Cubao. For reservations call 913-5701, 886-7692, 913-2694.

A Christmas (Ham) Story

TODAY, EVERY FILIPINO FAMILY'S most celebrated month is never complete without Fiesta Ham gracing the Noche Buena table for both Christmas and New Year's. Its sweet, succulent, and savory taste never fails to bring a special smile to lips as the joys and triumphs of past years are reminisced.

Which brings to mind the question of how such a decidedly western delicacy became an integral part of local culture.

In her book, "Palayok", the late writer, author, and food guru Doreen Fernandez traces the ham's place in Philippine history and culture, to the Spanish colonization.

"Ingredients ordinary in the Spanish kitchen, such as sausages (*chorizos*), ham (*jamon*), salted pork (*tocino*), olive oil and wine, were rare and expensive in the Philippines. But because the Spaniards were the colonial masters, their food was seen as desirable, high class, elite."

Further, the author describes:

"As the days creep towards the 25th, homes fill with more food being prepared for the family reunions and guests, especially for the Christmas eve meal, the *media noche* or *noche buena* (the evening of goodness), which some families have right after Midnight Mass, and some the morning after."

"This meal is usually in a Castilian mode, since Christianity was brought in by colonization: *jamon en dulce*, a sugar-glazed ham; slices of Edam cheese, called *queso de bola*; a fat stuffed capon or turkey-*relleno*, galantine, or *pavo embuchado*; walnuts and chestnuts, apples and grapes, the whole Spanish package."

And since Spanish cooking, according to Fernandez, was dominantly "fiesta cuisine", then perhaps it won't be a stretch to assume that this is why the most popular incarnation today of the *jamon en dulce*, is Fiesta Ham.

Indeed, there are many reasons why Fiesta Ham has become an indispensable Christmas treat. Aside from its sweet, delicious taste, it is also convenient to serve, because it's ready-to-eat, thoroughly cured, and cooked to perfection.

So popular is the delicacy that it has spawned many other types of hams.

The Pear-Shaped Ham, carefully molded in a fancy pear shape and uniquely enhanced with an aromatic blend of sweet and salty flavors, is an all-around favorite.

Jamon de Bola, another popular variant, is a sweet, smoked lean meat ham with a round shape and usually glazed.

Slightly sweet and juicy, the Noche Buena Brick Ham is an attractive addition to any Noche Buena table setting.

With Chinese culture having as much of an influence to us as Spain's, the Chinese Ham has emerged as another family favorite. A unique fusion of sweet, salty and spicy oriental flavors, this ham brings out a delightful Chinese twist to any holiday feast.

Chicken-lovers are not left out, as there is now also Chicken Ham. Smoked and glazed with sugar, it is made from a plump whole chicken molded to keep its shape, a definite alternative for health buffs.

Hamon con Queso, a new innovation that is starting to become popular, combines the goodness of ham with another popular Christmas treat: cheese. It is whole ham made of prime meat speckled with rich bits of cheese.

This Christmas season, value-added meats maker Purefoods-Hormel Company, makers of Purefoods Fiesta Ham, dubbed the "star of the Noche Buena season", continues to bring us these popular and much-loved ham variations which have become part of the Filipino Christmas tradition.

With these delicious and delectable hams on your tables, you can truly say that Christmas is indeed merry.

**Excerpts from Doreen Fernandes' "Palayok" used with permission from her family.*

CRAB VONGOLE
All time favorites at Clawdaddy's are baby back ribs, which are succulent and tender slow-cooked baby back ribs with your choice of BBQ flavor: Watermelon, rootbeer and chipotle. Clawdaddy's King Sampler are all-American barbecue feast of Clawdaddy's baby back ribs, beef barbeque ribs, and hickory barbeque chicken. Other menu would be the Jambalaya and Crab skillet, Jambalaya and Ribs skillet, Vietnamese-style Grilled Lobster, Lemon Cream Mussels (mussels in light lemon cream soup), and Riverboat Shrimps (shrimps sautéed in Creole spices). Located at The Ledge, 6/L Shangri-La Plaza Mall Ortigas and Claw Daddy B6 Bonifacio High Street Taguig. For inquiries, call 636-5679 or 856-4785

Old-style cheese from modern facilities

MARCA PIÑA QUESO DE BOLA IS A PREMIUM Edam cheese made in Holland by Frico Cheese, the largest cheese company in the Netherlands established since 1898. Their products are exported to more than 80 countries, making Frico Cheese one of the top five dairy companies in the world.

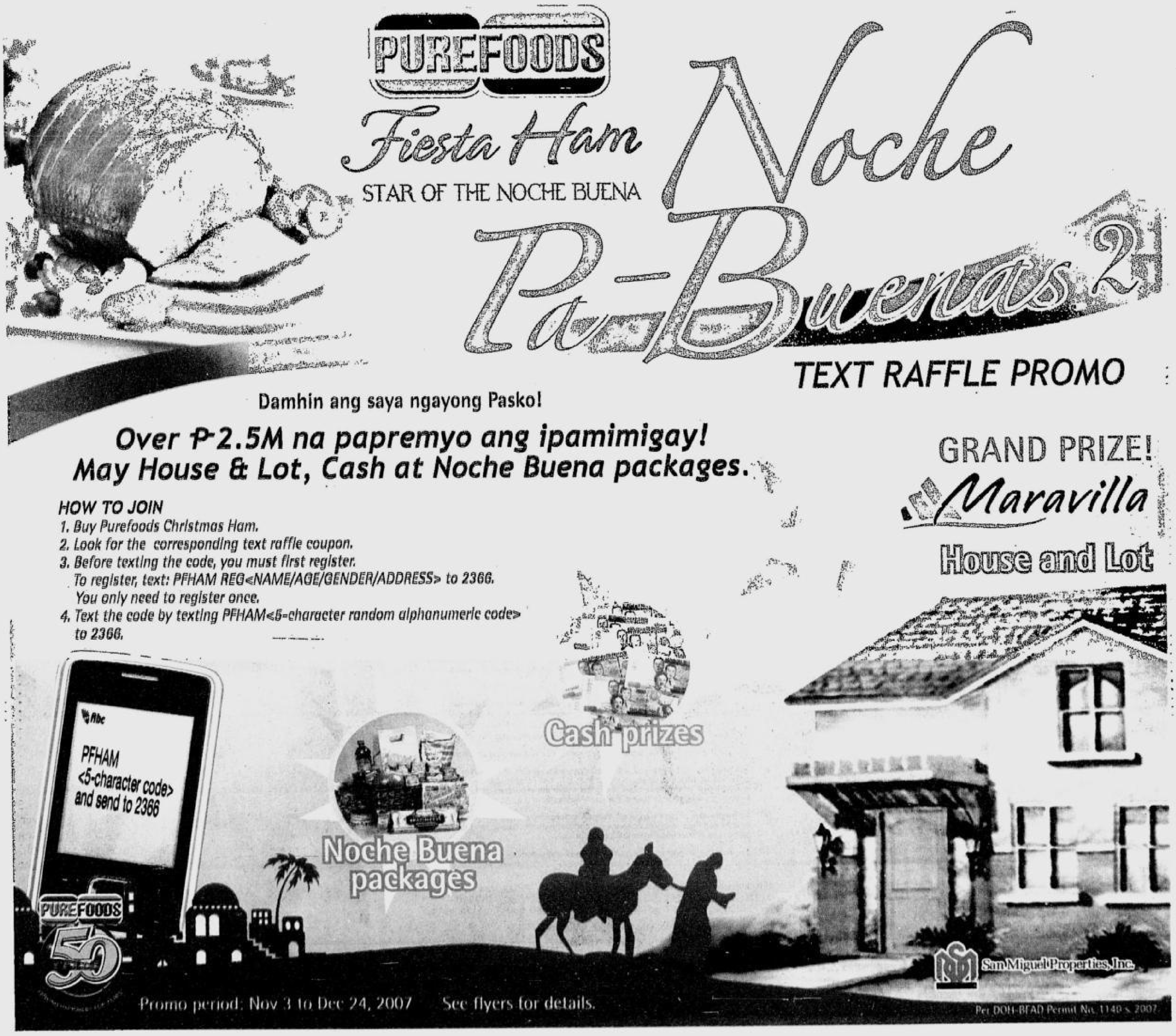
The old-fashioned tradition of cheese making is still being practiced under Frico's modern technology and production facilities. Meticulous care is given from the pasteurization of the milk, curdling, brining, until the cheese matures for about 16 weeks—no, shortcuts, no compromises. Excellence in this craft has been their custom since the 1930s

Generations after generations have continuously trusted the brand Marca Pina, making it a famous household name among Filipinos. Therefore, if somebody wants queso de bola, it's as good as saying "Marca Piña."

Marca Piña Queso de Bola has been sharing its cheesy goodness directly to every Filipino's taste buds from all walks of life. Not only is it associated with high quality *queso de bola*, it also means prosperity and luck. Pina is pineapple in English and pineapple is "Ong Lai" in Chinese. "Ong" means prosperity, fortune, wealth and good luck, while "Lai" is to come or is coming. Thus the significance of the pineapple found on the label.

A very ideal and versatile cheese, its flavor is characterized as slightly salty and tangy, smooth and filling. Each slice of Marca Piña has a soft spot in our hearts and place in our daily lives. Culture and tradition is now richer because of this cheese—the stuff really made for fun and feast!

Price: 1.5 kg - P735 - P745.00
750 g - P420-430.00



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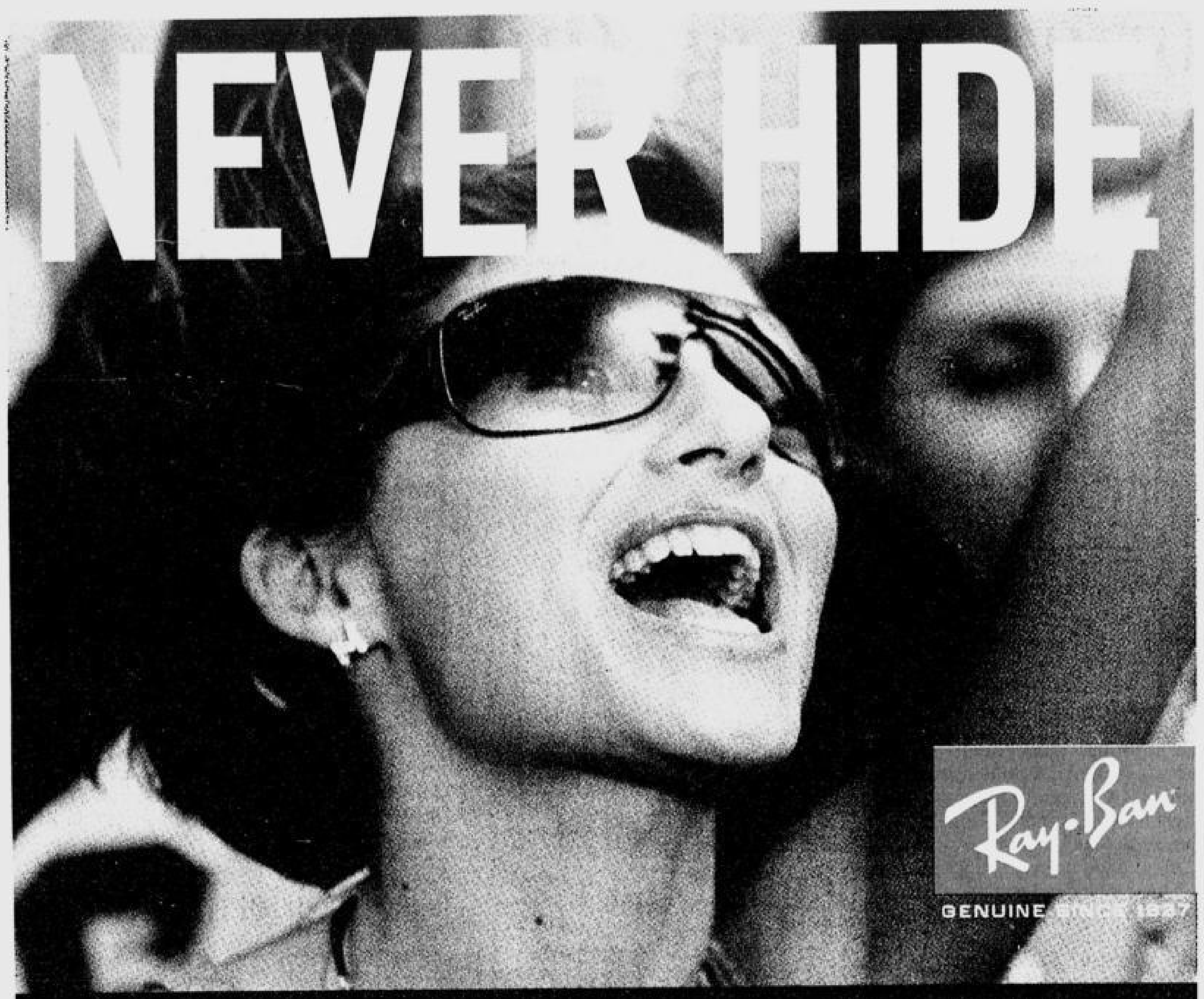
1. Buy Purefoods Christmas Ham.
2. Look for the corresponding text raffle coupon.
3. Before texting the code, you must first register.
To register, text: PFHAM REG<NAME/AGE/GENDER/ADDRESS> to 2366.
You only need to register once.
4. Text the code by texting PFHAM<5-character random alphanumeric code> to 2366.

Promo period: Nov 3 to Dec 24, 2007 See flyers for details.

Per DOH-BFAD Permit No. 1140 s. 2007



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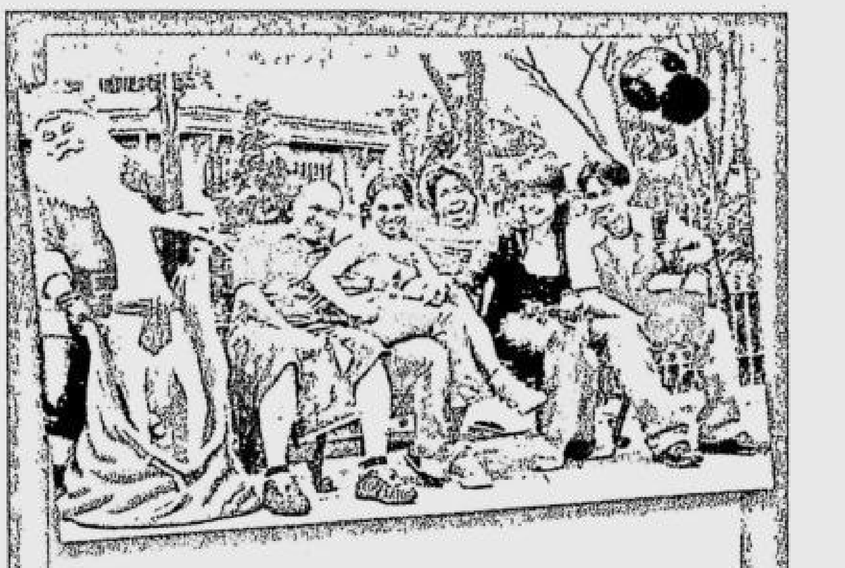
Canon Motorola RAZR² shu uemura etc INQUIRER



THE AUTHOR (2nd from right) working for a live morning show on Christmas day

Seeing the best in people

It was one of the hardest times in our family as my father went through intensive care a week before Christmas

By Cristina P. Agatep
2bU! Correspondent

HAVING TO WORK ON Christmas day of 2006 was my most unforgettable Christmas ever.

Working during holidays isn't really new. I have no whines about it as my "Morning TV" job requires me to be on call all the time. But Christmas day of 2006 was the time I was both at my saddest and happiest.

It was one of the hardest times in our family as my father went through intensive care a week before Christmas.

This crisis proved that people are innately caring. I was overwhelmed by the kindness of others. Co-workers I hardly knew, people at work, even neighbors that I normally did not greet showed that they truly cared and were concerned over the condition of my father. They expressed the same genuine affection I had felt from friends. I felt guilty for being anti-social.

Working on Christmas eve and Christmas day itself was an inspiration for me, because by then I was so thankful that my father's health problem was over.

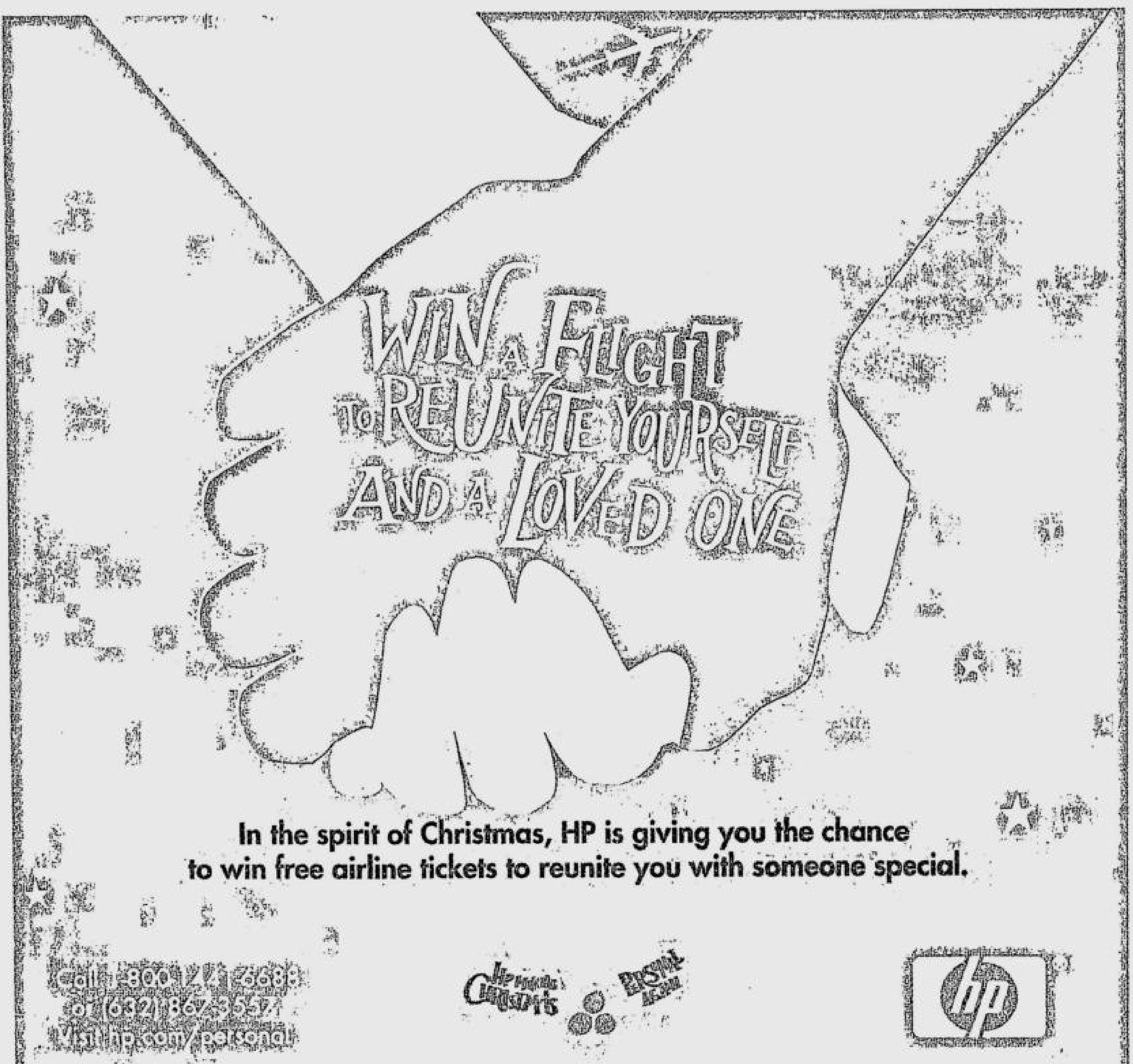
I didn't care that Christmas was supposed to be a holiday for me. I was just thankful.

I was grateful for everybody's concern, for their care. It made me change the way I saw people. This jaded world, where I saw people in a mostly cynical way, made me realize that, indeed, there are so many things to be thankful for.

E-mail the author teng_agatep@yahoo.com

READER Giovanni Barrantes sent this photo of his kids, Dingay and Dingoy, taken during a family celebration in Parañaque.

CHINKAI Rosario shares this photo of her and her sister Ro-an at Ocean Park Hong Kong.



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5. The winner will be randomly drawn at 37th floor Robinsons Summit Center, Ayala Avenue, Makati City on January 25,2008 at 3PM in the presence of a DTI representative. The first valid and eligible entry drawn will win. The winner will be notified thru registered mail and email and telephone within 14 days of the winner being selected and his / her name will be published on Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippines Star and Manila Bulletin on January 31,2008.
6. The prize is to be collected at the Promoter's office by the winner.

    The collection address shall be provided in the notification to the winner. Winners must present the winning stubs together with the registered mail (confirmation letters), proof or purchase and any Valid ID (Driver's License, SSS, GSIS, Postal ID, Company ID, School ID) when claiming the prize.
7. The prize is transferable, but not exchangeable or redeemable for cash.
8. The prize has to be claimed within 60 days from receipt of notification or the prize will be forfeited upon approval from DTI. No compensation will be due to the winner who fails to claim the prize within the stipulated time. Collection instructions will be provided in the same notification.
9. All employees of HP Philippines, Yeaps Corporation, related agencies, third parties and their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity and affinity are disqualified from joining the promo.
10. See raffle ticket and flyer for complete Terms and Conditions

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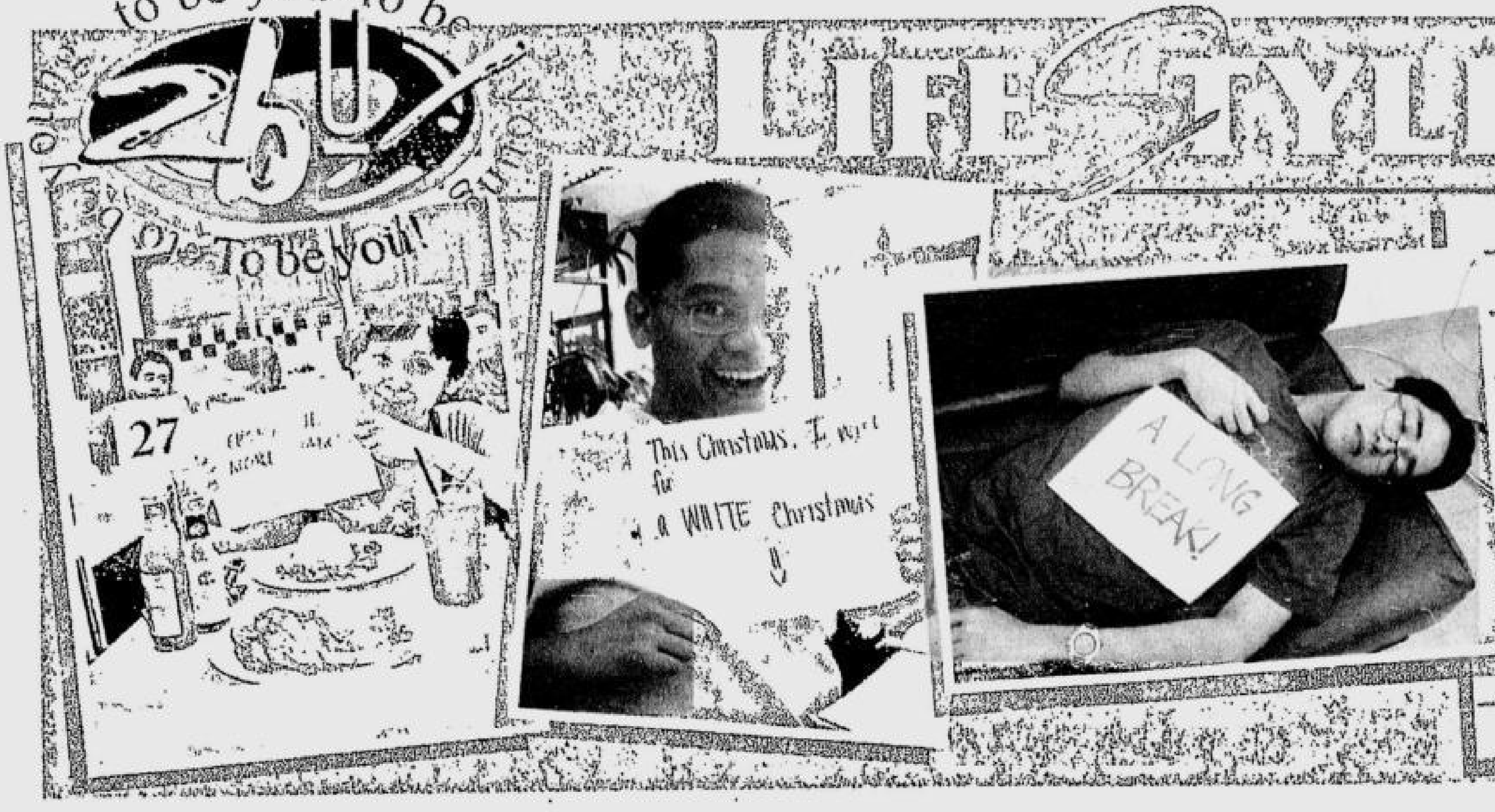
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LG KU250

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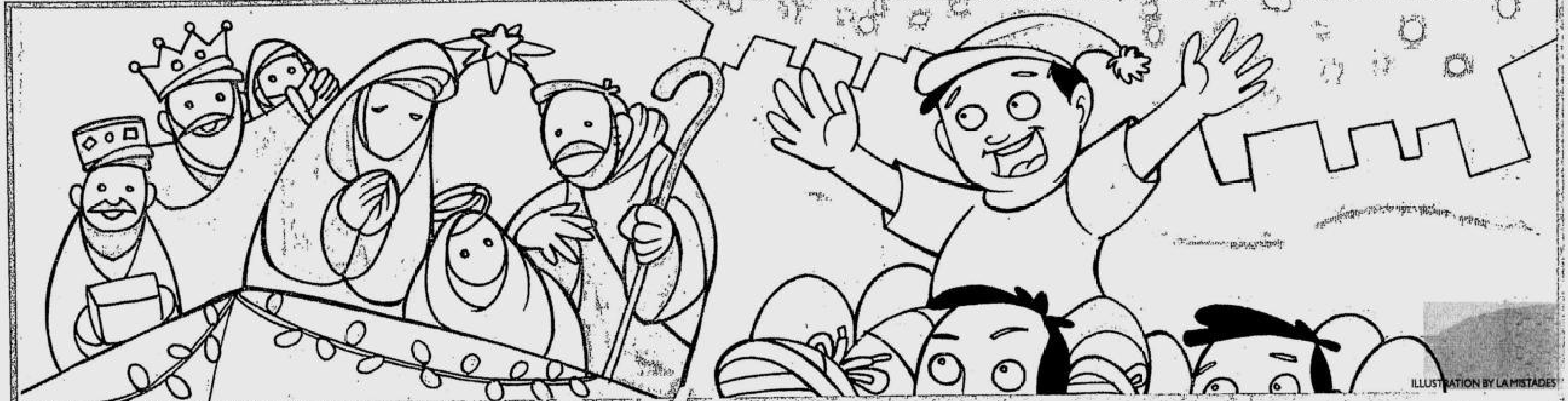


ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADES

Christmas in Cubao

For a few nights back when we were kids, we sat on the shoulders of our fathers, and we felt the spirit of the seaso

By Philbert Ortiz Dy

EVEN AS A LITTLE kid, I knew Cubao was different. It wasn't anything particularly overt, but I always got the feeling from my friends that they wouldn't come to my house.

Every group work, every get-together would always be in someone else's house, no matter how inconveniently far they lived. There was just something about Cubao, maybe a stench, or just a vibe, that scared the parents of little Chinese kids. In all honesty I couldn't blame them: A walk down Aurora Boulevard was enough to tell anyone that Cubao wasn't really for kids.

But Christmas—Christmas was different. Christmas belonged to Cubao.

Few people know this, but buildings seem to age faster in Cubao. It could be due to a lot of things—the smoke on the walls, the dust on the streets, the wear and tear that comes with being so central in terms of transportation in the city.

Maybe part of it was also a lack of connection to the place; as Cubao fell apart, no one came to pick up the pieces. It wasn't very long before Cubao's sheen turned into a relentless gray, and an overall drabness came to define the place.

But Christmas would change everything. Well, by change, I mean "cover." The general state of disrepair was still there, but it would get draped with a blanket of lights and accessorized with a myriad of decorations. At night, there would be a halo surrounding Araneta Center as a thousand little lights lit up the architecture.

Even against the regular orange glow of Cubao, the Center rang out clear and true. "It's Christmas. It's time to go to Cubao."

Bright reasons

And there were a lot of reasons to make that trip. There was Fiesta Carnival, the all-year indoor amusement park. It didn't really have much business for most of the year, but when Christmas came, the cable cars ran nonstop, and a long line would form to ride the caterpillar. A pretty decent Christmas bazaar would crop up around the Fiesta Carnival area—pretty rare back in those days.

The second reason would be Toyland up in SM Cubao. These were the days before the big toy stores had opened, and Toyland was a kid's paradise, with walls filled with rack upon rack of G.I. Joes and family computer games.

Third, there was the yearly Disney on Ice in Araneta Coliseum, where Peter Pan skillfully deflected Captain Hook's attacks with a triple axel, and children drank colorful drinks in tumblers that they got to bring home.

And then there was COD.

By itself, COD was hardly anything special. It couldn't compete with the nearby SM, and wasn't nearly as interesting as Ali Mall. It had mostly become the place where people bought school uniforms.

But come Christmas, the façade of the building became home to an animatronic show. It would be different every year. Some years, a group of robot wise men would follow the star to find a robot Mary and Joseph cradling a robot Baby Jesus. On another year, a robot Santa Clause would ride his sleigh, drawn by robot reindeer, and travel from house to house delivering gifts to children. Robot children, of course. And it would all be incredibly amazing.

Families spent their nights on Gen. Romulo Avenue, across the street from the building, to watch the robot stories unfold.

It isn't too often in modern life that new traditions are created, but the COD became a tradition in every sense. It was something to look forward to every year, something that told people that Christmas was here. The scaffolding would come up around November, and it was heartwarming to see people building Christ's manger or Santa's workshop.

If you passed by every day, you could see the cast of metal men growing as the scene came together. To a child like me then, that was the most wonderful thing in the world.

Glorious sight

It's kind of strange to think about it now, all the children and the parents out there on Gen. Romulo Avenue, watching the show. Just down the road, across Aurora, were the neon signs of some of the sleaziest bars Cubao had to offer. Around the corner, women waited just outside Mercury Drug, waiting for someone to take them home.

A little further down Aurora, the dankest, seediest little adult theater in the Metro showed you dirty double features for P30. Cubao was still Cubao, after all, and even the grandest of Christmas shows wouldn't change that.

But for just a few minutes on those nights, as robots filled the sky, people would forget where they were. In the time it took the Wise Metal Men to find Robot Jesus, or for Cyber Santa to make it back to the North Pole, nothing mattered except being there, being part of all of it.

It was children sitting on their father's shoulders, struggling to get a better look. It was mothers trying to figure out how to use their cameras without having to put down their Christmas shopping. It was the cars, jeepneys, and taxis, the whole world rushing past on Gen. Romulo Avenue, and no one caring.

It was Christmas in Cubao, and it was glorious.

Cubao's changed a lot since then—or at least Araneta Center. Much of what's outside the Center is still the same, although with new paint jobs. Araneta Center is once again becoming a gleaming beacon of modernity.

The aging buildings have had a facelift, and Cubao doesn't feel so old anymore. The rustic charm is still there in some places, and the environs are still pretty seedy, but plans are afoot to have the Center become a high-density, high-class area lined with skyscrapers.

This progress will most likely radiate out from the Center, changing Cubao little by little until people eventually forget that they were ever afraid to go there.

Christmas is different as well. The lights are still there, perhaps brighter than ever, but the feeling isn't the same anymore. Fiesta Carnival moved outside, then eventually closed. The lot it used to occupy is now empty except for a couple of rides that couldn't be dismantled so easily. Train tracks still line the ground where tiny trains used to run, and it's a dismal sight.

SM Toyland isn't there anymore, either, engulfed by the appliances section. Disney on Ice still happens every year, but no one really cares anymore post-mall-ice-skating-rink.

Missing something

Most tragically, COD is gone. The building is now a supermarket, and the show has moved to Greenhills, where it fails to capture the magic of those nights on Gen. Romulo. It just doesn't feel as special in Greenhills, surrounded as it is by the homes of some of the richest people in the country.

Without COD and its robots, Christmas in Cubao feels like it's missing something. There's less of a crackle in the air, less magic, and it starts to feel like Christmas anywhere else in the metro. And even as the lights shine brighter, the city turns a little grayer.

But sometimes, I still feel the remnants of Christmases past while walking down Cubao's well-worn streets. Even as Cubao grows farther and farther from what it was, the memory of it grows stronger in the hearts of those of us who saw robots in the sky.

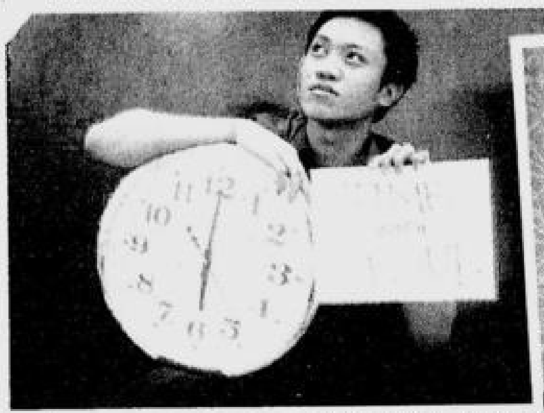
It's easy to become cynical about Christmas these days, but the magic of those nights could sustain a generation. And we'll keep Christmas near and dear to us, we'll strive to keep it special, because for a few nights back when we were kids, we sat on the shoulders of our fathers, and we saw Christmas.

This Christmas, I want...

By Vanessa Arellano Doctor

2bU! asked readers what they ache for so much this Christmas

THIS CHRISTMAS
I WISH FOR
A HEALTHY
FAMILY!



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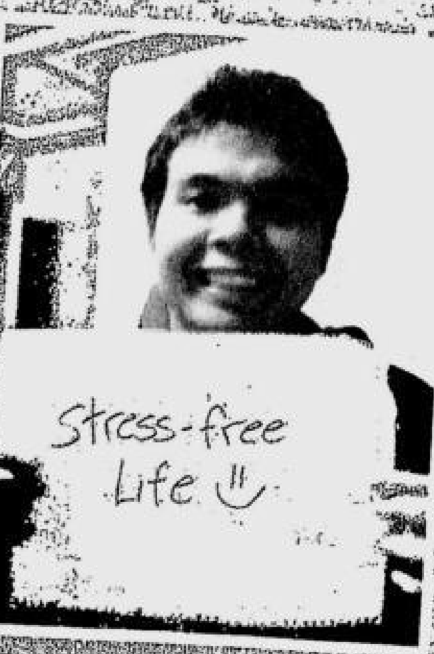
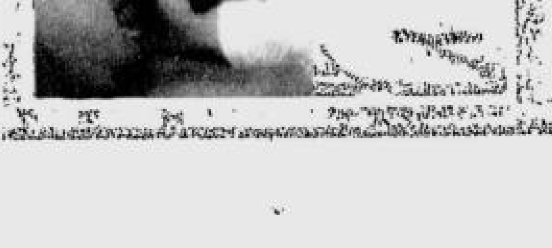
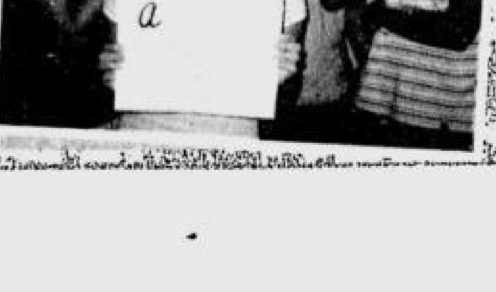
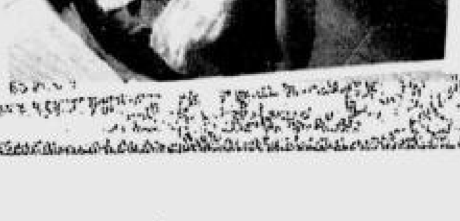








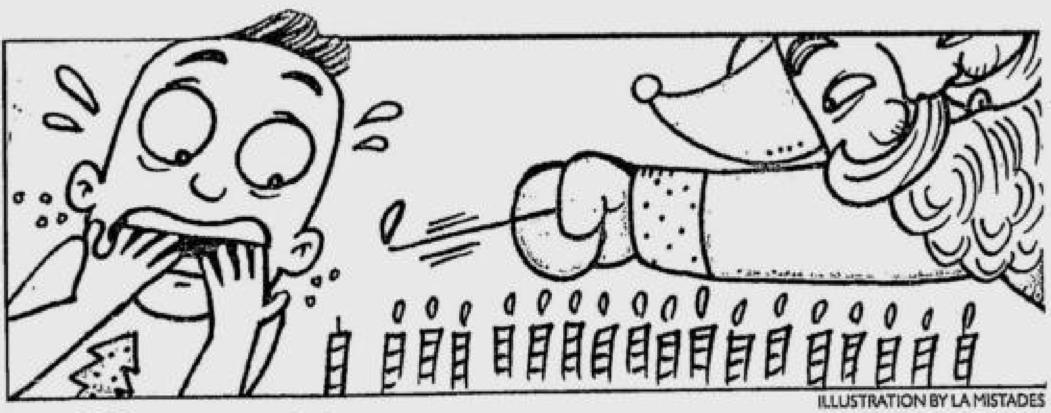


ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADES

Finally growing up this CHRISTMAS

By Ronin Bautista

> I will turn 18 three days after Christmas. The thought is killing me

I WOULD START COUNTING the days before Christmas once September came, and I would make it a point to update people of the count whenever I could. Back in high school, I would write the countdown in our classroom's chalkboard and our student publication office's white board. Even if people said it was too early to be counting and that I was just too excited, I'd still update the numbers everyday.

This year, I put up a digital countdown on Multiply and included a text update in my YM status messages. The next thing I knew, a high-school friend also had the same thing in his stat, and we were both excited about it.

It was fun to celebrate Christmas back home last year; we celebrated a couple of Christmases before that abroad: in Hong Kong in 2004 and in Singapore/Thailand in 2005. Not that I didn't enjoy the trip, but I really missed the way we would have Noche Buena (we had to sleep early for the flight) and other stuff that I hoped we wouldn't spend the next one out of the country. I never thought I would miss the midnight affair that much.

But as the days went from 100 days to 70, the more I came to realize that this Christmas might be different. Not that I suddenly lost the spirit, it was just that during the course of my countdown, I received a number of invitations from friends: from girls who would be having their debuts and guys who would eat out on their 18th. This brought me to one reality that this Christmas is going to be my last as a minor, and that I'll be a legal citizen of this country three days after that.

Being born on Dec. 28 is not really bad. In fact, that's another reason I loved Christmas: People are still hung up on the Yuletide hype and at the same time preparing for the New Year, and my birthday falls beautifully in between, and everybody's in a festive mood.

But after the "18" thought sunk in, I gradually lost count of the days. I didn't want to get old. I hated 18: It meant more responsibility and less reason to play around, more reason to get serious. I felt pretty down for a few days...

How much you've grown

Until I came across a birthday video of a friend, who happened to celebrate his 19th birthday late in October. We sent in some messages and a friend compiled them into a video, and in that I read something that, although it was not for me, made me understand something big.

It said no one should call it growing old, but as growing up, and it's not how many numbers you answer when people ask your age, but how much you've grown.

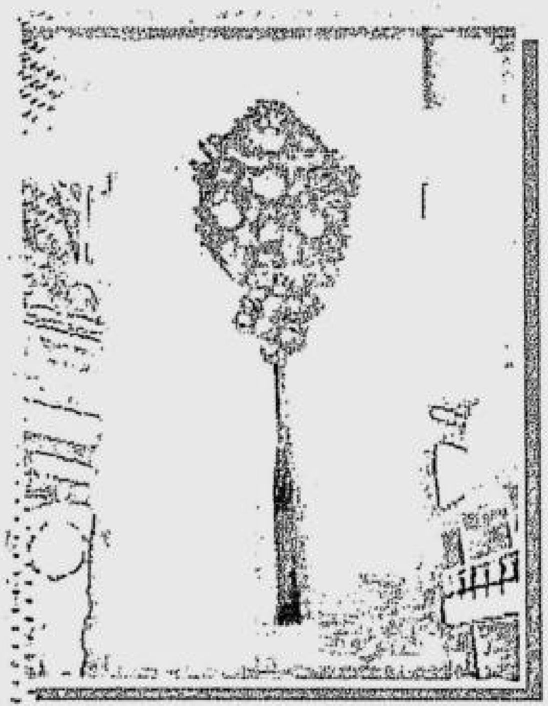
Then I remembered birthdays are celebrations of life, and that being sad about mine would be the saddest thing I could do to myself.

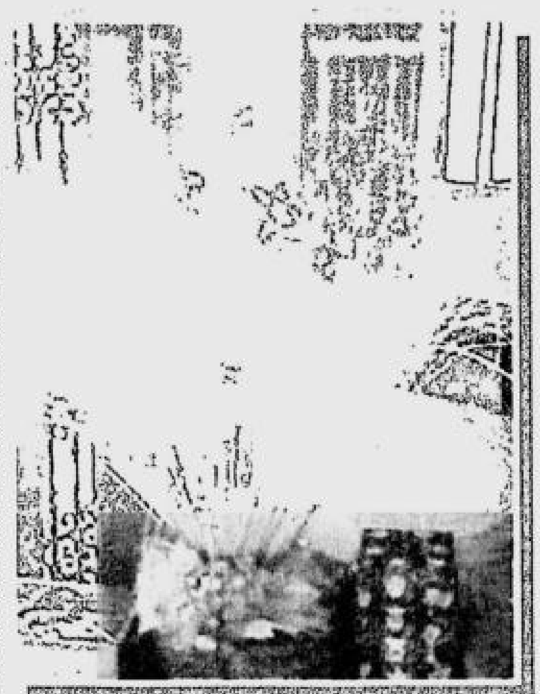
I was also reminded of Christmas, that it's a celebration of Christ's coming. He came to this world and lived like us: He played, loved, and grew up, just like we all do. Now I see it was really a shame to be dreading my 18th, I who would look through the calendar when I was young to see how close my birthday was to Christmas, and later tell everyone that if I had been born three days earlier then I had to open two gifts from each of them during Noche Buena.

I'm back to counting the days now. The second semester started with my friends celebrating their 18th, some their 19th, birthday, and they were all happy. I should, too.

Christmas carols now fill the airwaves, not as much as before but it's still noteworthy. Lights now adorn the different buildings in our campus and it's such a lovely sight whenever I go home at night. It's going to be Christmas, and there's no stopping it, the same way my birthday will come even if I used to dread it.

This might be my last birthday as a minor, but it won't be my last as a kid, for I will always be that in my heart. Besides, I guess it's about time that I do some growing up. Time will fly so fast and more Christmases will come that it won't wait for me; I have to get up and cope with it. There are no more worries, for I have my family and friends to lean on just in case I need them.


WALL hanging made of badminton racquet

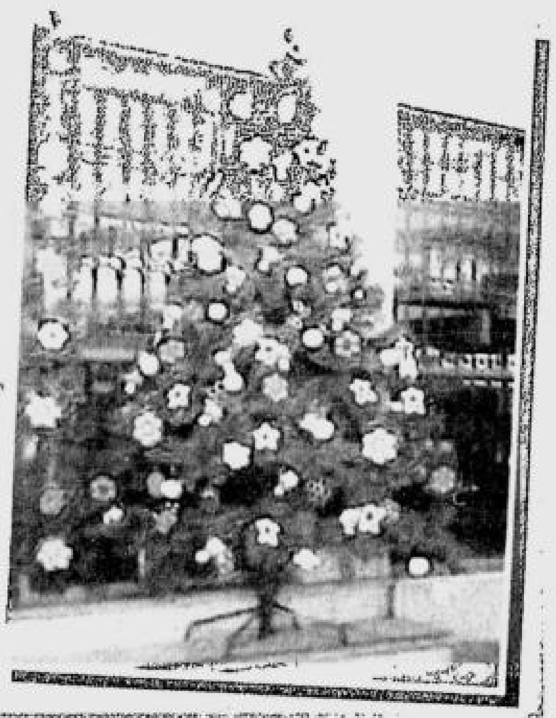

DELIGHTFUL spray

Recycled decor

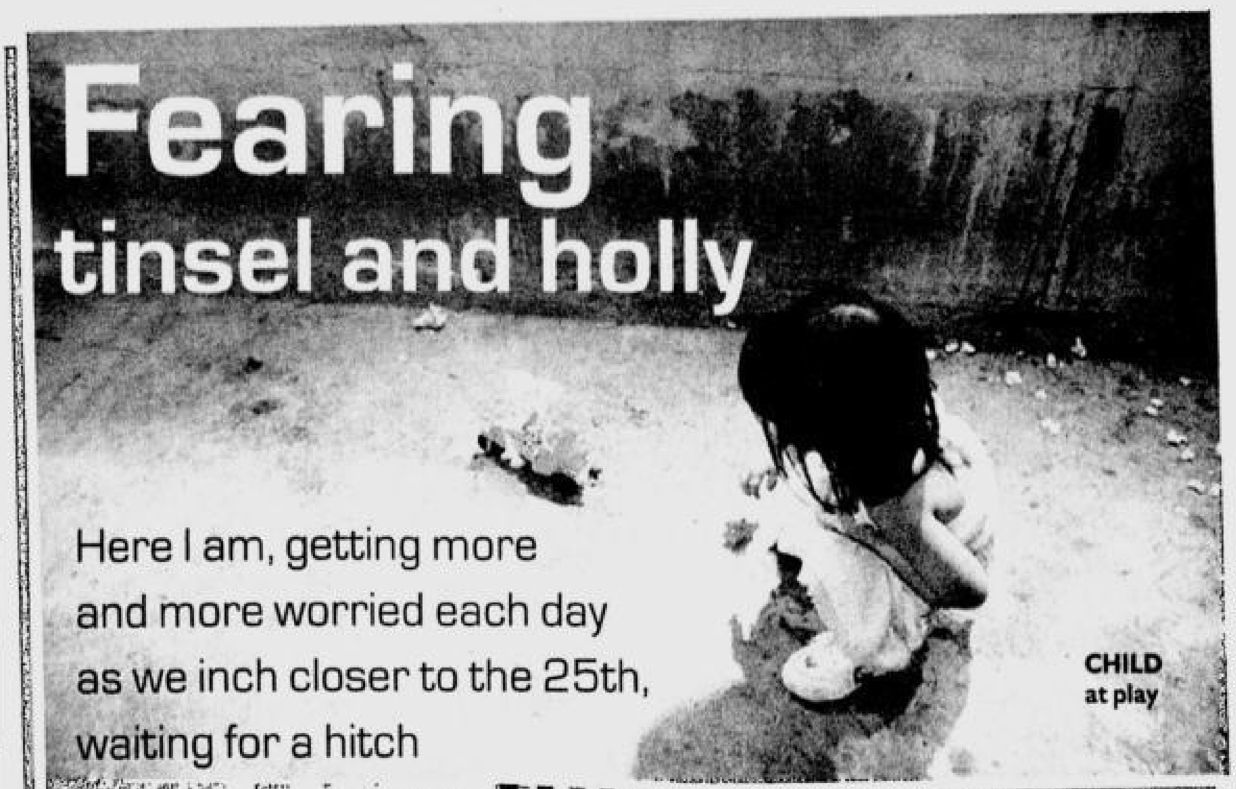
By Auskee del Prado

WE CAN MAKE CHRISTmas decor out of discarded stuff. Here are some of the decorations we made for our office.

We've turned badminton racquets into lanterns, and made Christmas ornaments out of junk. It's cheap, convenient and environment-friendly. Give recycling a try this season!


TREE decked out in recycled material

Fearing tinsel and holly


Here I am, getting more and more worried each day as we inch closer to the 25th, waiting for a hitch
CHILD at play

Text and photos
by Ryan Fernandez

LAST CHRISTMAS, I FOUND myself alone in my apartment in New York, staring at microwaved leftovers of General Cho's Chicken. After smacking my lips, I jabbed my spoon in, desperate to break up the sticky, overly orange clumps of breaded chicken and broccoli.

A week later, on New Year's Eve, I rushed up the stairs to my new place in Queens, lugging a six-pack of Corona. I fumbled for my keys to no avail. Sometime between the arduous climb and the struggle to open the frozen doorknob, the world outside ushered in 2007.

I dragged myself into the bare apartment, discarded a coat, a hoodie, a sweater, and tights, uncapped a bottle of beer and promptly sat on the fuzzy, paint-scented carpet.

But, actually, it was a good year.

The same time the year before, I was in Manila, watching children shop, point, and handle realistically looking toy firearms. The year before, I was at the East Avenue emergency room, pretending to be a press photographer so I could document fireworks victims.

Interviewing people with missing fingers and gaping holes where palms should be had its own thrill, but still, I wanted to be elsewhere.

At one point a dead person (a victim of a knife fight) was wheeled in. Though the corpse was already draped in white, two brown feet were stuck out of the sheets. It felt like a joke. A nearby blackboard contained a casualty tally. The maimed people led over the dead ones by a dozen points.

Somewhere along the way, the holiday season started to scare me. Somewhere along the way, the word "Christmas" made me nervous. The hordes of people at the malls. The driving need to buy everything and anything. The shopping guides. The wish lists. The must-haves.

The news showing children with bandaged hands sobbing and TV specials recapping the year's disasters, and the always-hopeful wishes for a better year to come.

Don't get me wrong: I like this time of the year. The smell of *bibingka*, the carolers, the big, fat, white man trying to get into my house despite it lacking a chimney. I'm glad to just be alive.

But for some reason, something, *something* always happens. So here I am, getting more and more worried each day as we inch closer to the 25th, waiting for a hitch. Waiting for disappointment to rear its ugly head, and say, "All this holiday cheer? It's just tinsel, my friend. You should know better than that."

AUTHOR (left) spending Christmas in New York

E-mail the author at ry.fern@gmail.com

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ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

Great Christmas, deal or no deal

Family presentations add to the fun of our clan reunions

By Nikki Laynes

FOR THREE YEARS now, our clan has been celebrating the annual Christmas reunion with a contest. On Christmas eve, all of my relatives from the province gather at my grandmother's house to celebrate Christmas.

To make the party more exciting, my grandmother in 2004 decided that every family should present a show.

An aunt from Germany sponsored the competition; that means she was going to give the prizes. First prize was P5,000, and there were consolation prizes.

Now it so happened that my mom was so driven to win. She came up with an idea. Since we were all Disney babies (we were raised watching Disney movies!), and there are five girls in our family (my four sisters and I) plus our mom, she decided that we'd do a Disney show.

She assigned a character for each one of us—Mulan, Little Mermaid, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella (me!), Beauty and the Beast (my mom and dad). We prepared the costumes, the music, and choreographed the whole show. Some were made to sing, some danced, and some did both.

The night of the competition, we were ready and confident to win. We were chosen to present first, and the others were very surprised and amused. They didn't think that we prepared that much, and I must admit, my mom's idea was pretty good.

After our presentation, the others felt they had no chance of winning since they didn't prepare much. They didn't think anybody would give much thought about it. The parents or adults weren't that concerned, but the kids, my cousins, sulked. They had been telling their parents to practice, but their parents were either too busy or just didn't care. Now they were regretting that they weren't able to come up with a better presentation.

Since it seemed we were the only ones who prepared, my grandmother decided to call off the competition. Instead, she decided to give us a vaseful of chocolate coins—imported I guess, with the glass vase more valuable than those inside it, but much less than the supposed prize. A bit unfair, I think.

Magic show

December 2005: Now everybody was preparing for each presentation. We decided to present (again, my mom's idea) a magic show! My dad's going to be the magician, and we were supposed to be the dancers and the assistants.

My mom hired someone to do our costumes and then we practiced our dance steps and blockings. My dad decided to go for a look-like—an Indian or a genie—with a chaleco and a turban. We also had to prepare appropriate music for the show.

Ha ha! It was a blast! The others didn't anticipate it. Although my dad (who practiced the tricks just earlier that day) failed on a trick, he managed to get the audience roaring with laughter and entertainment.

Though it was a little messy presentation, the idea was unique as compared to the others; its impact was greater.

We won. We were happy. My bachelor-uncle sponsored the prizes. But they decided to reduce the first prize and increase the lower prizes, after, of course, our presentation. A bit unfair, I think.

Game show

December 2006: My mom had an idea again. It seemed like she's always prepared for this. She wanted a "Deal or No Deal" show. There are six girls total—my youngest sister was to play Kris Aquino, and the rest of us were to be the 26K. My dad would be the banker, and he was so excited that he devised his radio set and headsets for "Kris."

My mom then again thought that we should be dressed in those sexy outfits the girls' in "Deal or No Deal" wore. So she decided to hire someone again to make our green spaghetti tank-top dresses.

Since there were only five of us as the 26K, we had two "briefcases" each so that there were 10 amounts to choose from. My dad asked one of his construction workers to make the stands and my sister and I made the envelopes with the amounts written on them (the briefcases).

Then there was the music I had to download with the opening music, banker's music and tension music (it's the one you hear when a contestant is thinking of what briefcase to open, and when to press the button or not).

It was fun preparing and dancing since we had to practice the dance steps the 26K girls do at the start of the show. Ours was all manual—there was a big illustration board for the amounts, and one of us had to strike out the amount which was opened.

The audience was happy! They enjoyed the show and they were very much entertained. We gave a real prize by the way; the highest was P1,000, and the lowest was P1. The winning contestant got P800.

The others presented a Nativity play and several dance shows. But we didn't win. The winner was one of the families that danced a folk dance crossed with modern steps and music. All of us were surprised. Even the winning family was surprised.

That was a year ago, and Christmas is here again. My mom's reply after we asked her what we're going to present this year, "*Ah, mag*-'Deal or No Deal' *pa rin tayo* every year *hanggang magsawa sila*."

Simple, painful holidays

By Albert Miranda

No other grand party or expensive gift can really match the satisfaction of being with one's family

ROBIN WILLIAMS' CHARacter in "One Hour Photo" said something to this effect: "We usually photograph only the happy moments in our lives and leave the sad ones."

The same goes with Christmas celebrations. When Christmas is brought up, images of parties, gift giving/receiving, no-diet feasts, *noche buena* and class or family reunions are top of mind. It is unusual to hear someone relating how unpleasant Christmas is, not unless he or she is The Scrooge.

I also share those candy-coated, unfortunately naive perceptions of Christmas. However, these types of Christmas celebrations are too generic to be considered memorable. It is ironic that the most memorable Christmas for me involved the simplest and most painful one.

In December 2002, I was recuperating from my first (and hopefully last) major operation: an appendectomy. I had almost died because my appendix had exploded before I got to the hospital. The poisonous substance slowly paralyzed me, preventing me from walking.

It scared the hell out of me to be under the knife. But thanks to the wonders of anesthesia, I never felt a single pain during the surgical procedure. But post-operation was a different story.

No matter how many antibiotics I took, my surgery wound got infected. Cleaning it was a nightmare, not only for me, but for my loving mother as well. She suffered the same sleepless nights, attending to my needs and making sure that I was comfortable despite fluctuating body temperature caused by stubborn fever.

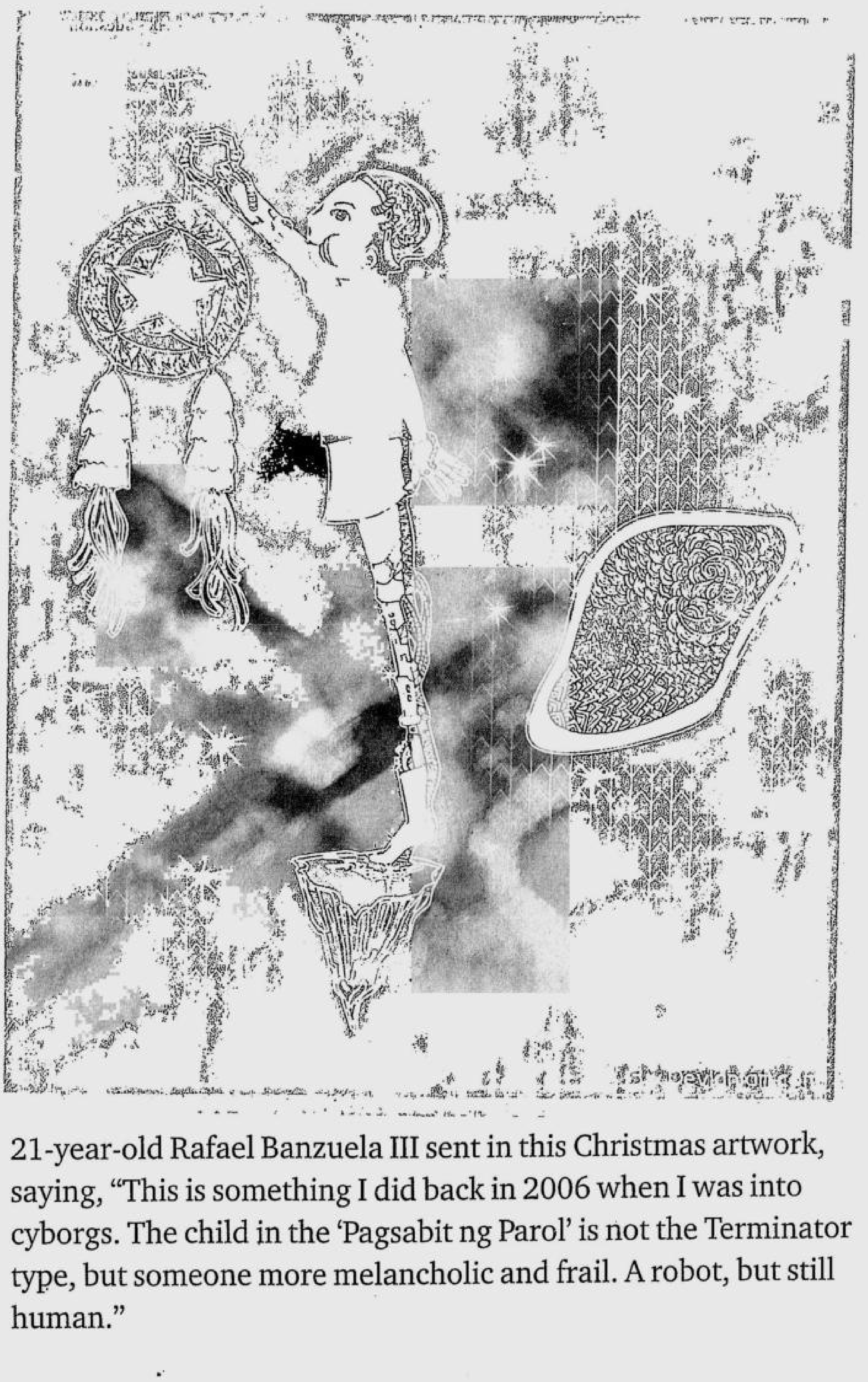
My dad was in constant anxiety, too, checking regularly if I was okay. And my sister, although not showy with her feelings, expressed her moral support. Friends, classmates and relatives came to visit me either in the hospital or in our house.

More traumatic was that I never could eat a Bavarian cream-filled donut for almost a year after that, because of the cream's strong resemblance to pus!

Due to the physical and financial constraints caused by my hospitalization, we had to make our *noche buena* as simple as possible that year. All the trimmings were considered unnecessary. But despite this reduced setting, I really enjoyed it. What made the difference was the fact that we were a complete family during these tumultuous times.

Cliché as it may sound, no other grand party or expensive gift can really match the satisfaction I felt during those times.

What made that Christmas also more meaningful was the realization that I was given a second lease on life. It's like being reborn with a purpose. Whatever that purpose may be, I am grateful that I am alive today with the opportunity to be a better person everyday. There are no pictures to prove the difficulties I had experienced, but my scar reminds me of that Christmas all the time.



21-year-old Rafael Banzuela III sent in this Christmas artwork, saying, "This is something I did back in 2006 when I was into cyborgs. The child in the 'Pagsabit ng Parol' is not the Terminator type, but someone more melancholic and frail. A robot, but still human."

LIFESTYLE

2bU! Young to be young • to be you! • To be you!

estyle@inquirer.com.ph
www.inquirer.net/lifestyle
t us your feedback:
e/age/city/message to
Globe) or 283 (Smart)

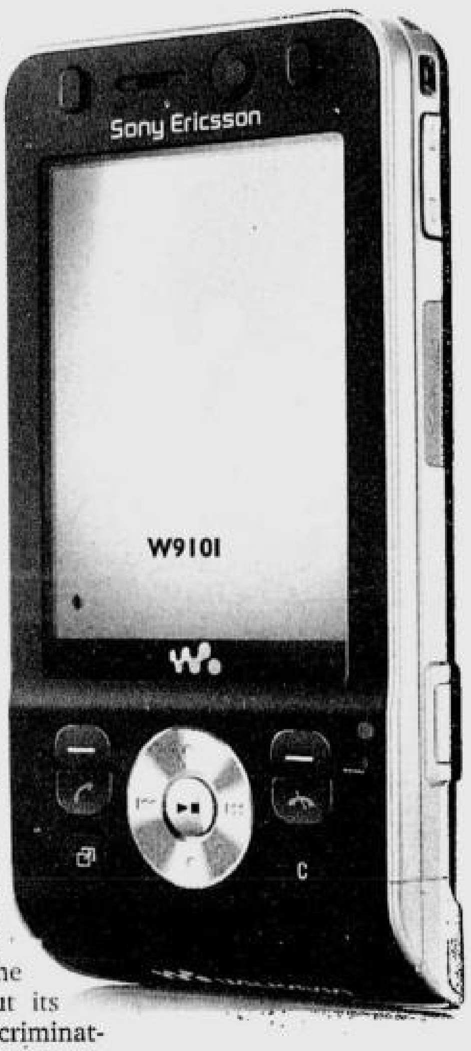
Sony Ericsson
4:28 pm
024/473
02:26
03:58
Modern Class
The Head Set
Way Past Used
Stop
More
WALKMAN

W660I

In the case of the Walkman phones, style and substance aren't exclusive of each other

Make sweet music this Christmas

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent



W910I

ASK EVERY OTHER high-school or college kid what he or she wants for Christmas, and you'll probably get a prompt reply: an mp3 player.

Portable music players in all shapes, colors and sizes are flying off the shelves this season, and with good reason—they're light, sleek and have powerhouse memories that can support thousands of files.

However, not everyone wants to carry around a boatload of gadgets (imagine rummaging in your bag and getting caught in a tangle of wires). For people who like keeping things simple, a multimedia cell phone is your best bet.

Sony Ericsson recently released a line of Walkman phones tailor-made for different types of cell-phone users.

One of their top-of-the-line models, the W910i, appeals to the fashion-conscious set. Its sleek exterior, large LCD screen and smooth finish make it look like the ultimate trendsetter's phone, but its specs can satisfy even the most discriminating techie geeks.

The W910i comes in Hearty Red (a matte-red metal finish) and Noble Black. If you're looking for attention, the W910i is the phone for you.

For those who want their phones simple-but still loaded with features—the model to check out is the W660i, a Walkman phone with a classic design 3G phone that belies its high-tech specs. Available in Record Black and Rose Red (sleek red metal embossed with a floral pattern), the phone is light and compact. Ideal for klutzes who often drop their phones and for people who text a lot (the keyboard lets you tap out messages fast) the design is also the most user-friendly of the series.

Sports lovers, on the other hand, will love the W580i. At only 14-mm thin, it's one of the smallest and slimmest of the Sony Ericsson Walkman phones. The W580i is made for people with an active lifestyle, with features that complement your fitness routine. Equipped with a pedometer and calorie counter, the phone not only keeps you entertained with hours of music, but will help keep you fit as well.

All Walkman phones can carry hundreds of full-length tracks; the W580i and W660i can store about 470 songs with the 512-mb Memory Stick Micro that they come with.

If you feel like upgrading, a 1-gb memory stick (which comes with the W990i) can get you about 1,000 full-length tracks. Tired of the songs on your track list? Switch to FM radio to get your fill of the latest tunes (check out the light effects on the W580i while you're playing music).

Speaking of radio tunes, if you hear a

MAKE/ E4

Win a Sony Ericsson Walkman phone!

YOUR SONY ERICSSON Walkman phone music playlist includes all your favorite music all the time. What you hear is the soundtrack of your life.

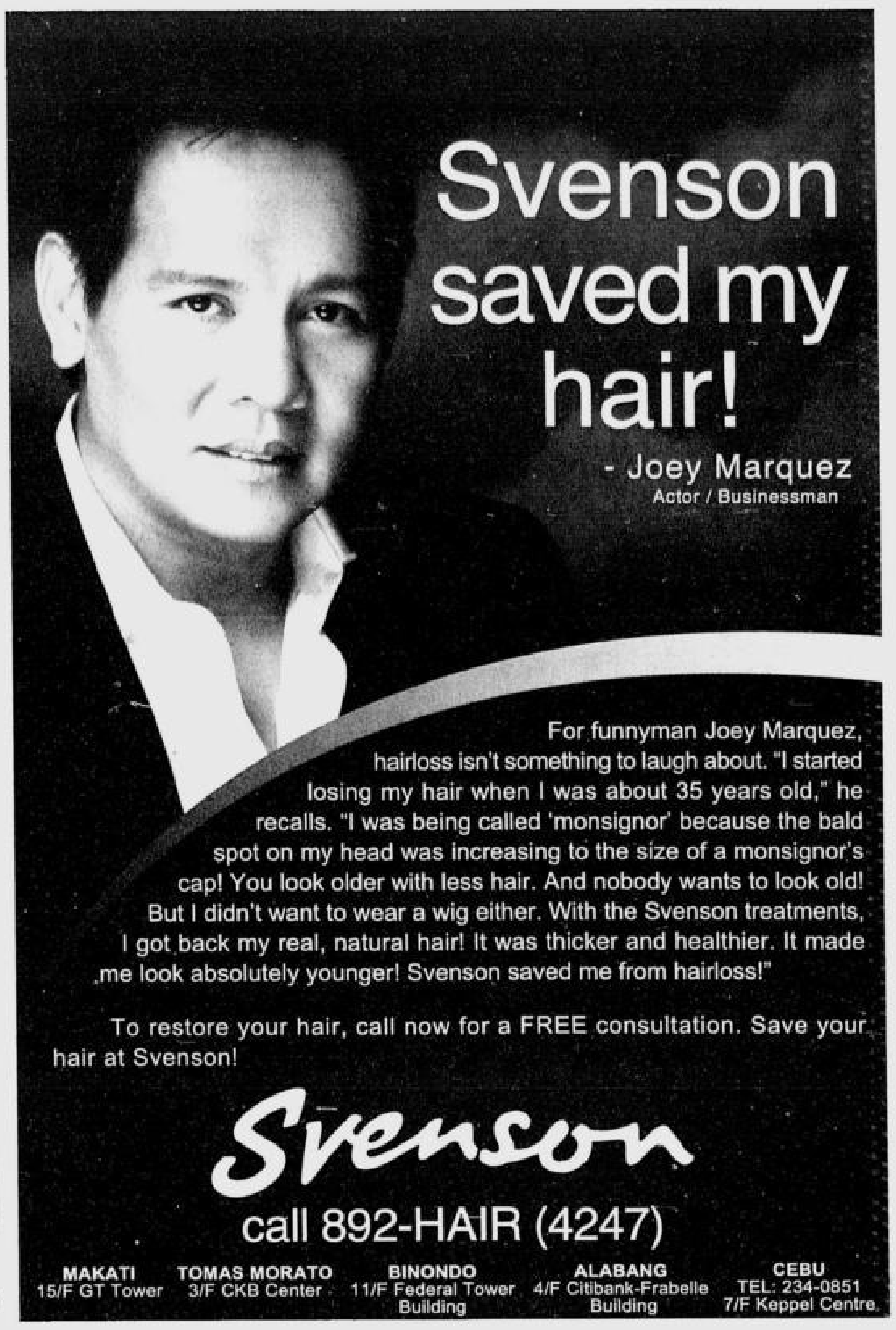
So what was playing when you felt the highs of passing that final exam or the first of day of vacation? What was playing when you got together or broke up and made up? Give us the best of your music memories to the weekly question and win a brand new Sony Ericsson Walkman phone!

This week's question is:

Another hour on the jeep, bus or train. What do you listen to when you commute?

E-mail your answer to sonyericsson2bu@gmail.com. Include your name, age and contact information plus the song title, artist and music genre. Deadline is on Dec. 21.

A unique and funny answer will get you the Sony Ericsson W660i Walkman phone.


Svenson saved my hair!
- Joey Marquez
Actor / Businessman

For funnyman Joey Marquez, hairloss isn't something to laugh about. "I started losing my hair when I was about 35 years old," he recalls. "I was being called 'monsignor' because the bald spot on my head was increasing to the size of a monsignor's cap! You look older with less hair. And nobody wants to look old! But I didn't want to wear a wig either. With the Svenson treatments, I got back my real, natural hair! It was thicker and healthier. It made me look absolutely younger! Svenson saved me from hairloss!"

To restore your hair, call now for a FREE consultation. Save your hair at Svenson!

Svenson
call 892-HAIR (4247)

MAKATI 15/F GT Tower
TOMAS MORATO 3/F CKB Center
BINONDO 11/F Federal Tower Building
ALABANG 4/F Citibank-Frabelle Building
CEBU TEL: 234-0851 7/F Keppel Centre

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Happy Holidays!
Kissables
Kissables
SAMSUNG

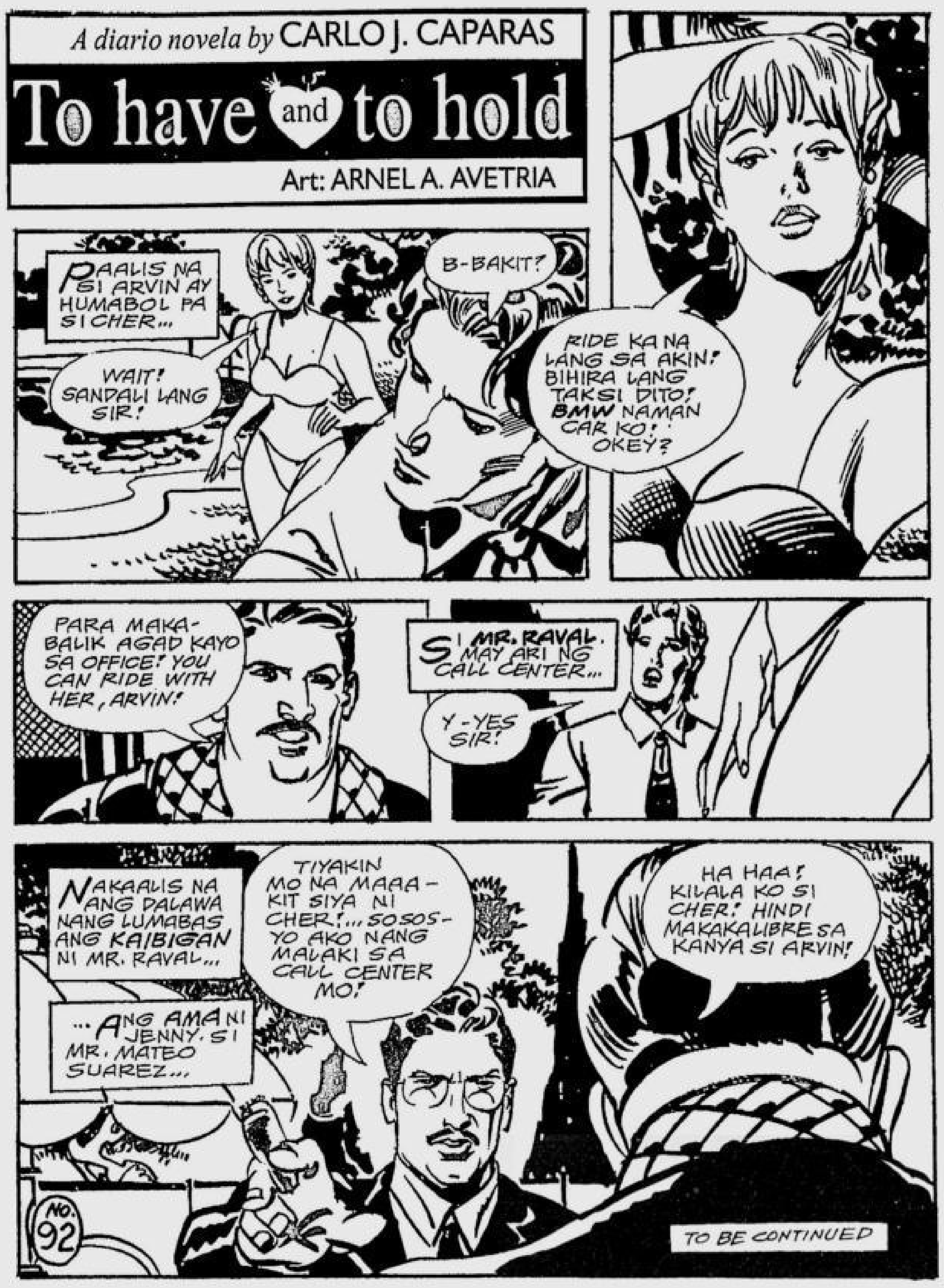
i am pro SPORTS
i go the extra mile with FILA
SPORTS Central
ALL THE RIGHT GEAR
SM CITY BAGUIO • SM CITY PAMPANGA • SM CITY FAIRVIEW • SM CITY NORTH EDSA • SM MEGAMALL • SM CITY MANILA
SM CITY STA. MESA • SM CITY SUCAT • SM CITY DASMARIÑAS • SM CITY BATANGAS • SM MALL OF ASIA
11
FILA ACADEMY
DIVISIONE
ATLETICA

Oishi you a Merry Christmas!

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

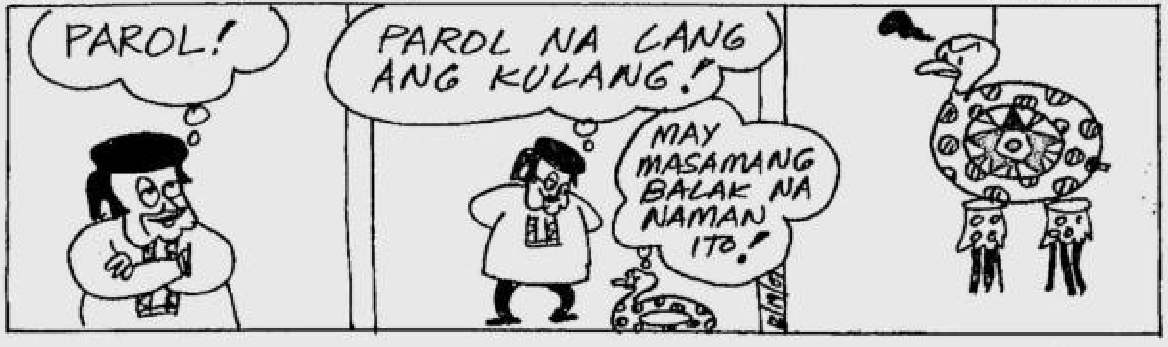
To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA


PAALIS NA SI ARVIN AY HUMABOL PA SI CHER...
WAIT! SANDALI LANG SIR!
B-BAKIT?
RIDE KA NA LANG SA AKIN! BIHIRA LANG TAKSI DITO! BMW NAMAN CAR KO! OKEY?
PARA MAKA-BALIK AGAD KAYO SA OFFICE! YOU CAN RIDE WITH HER, ARVIN!
SI MR. RAVAL. MAY ARI NG CALL CENTER...
Y-YES SIR!
NAKAALIS NA ANG DALAWA NANG LUMABAS ANG KAIBIGAN NI MR. RAVAL...
TIYAKIN MO NA MAAA-KIT SIYA NI CHER!... SOSOS-YO AKO NANG MALAKI SA CALL CENTER MO!
HA HAA! KILALA KO SI CHER! HINDI MAKAKALIBRE SA KANYA SI ARVIN!
...ANG AMA NI JENNY, SI MR. MATEO SUAREZ...
NO. 92
TO BE CONTINUED

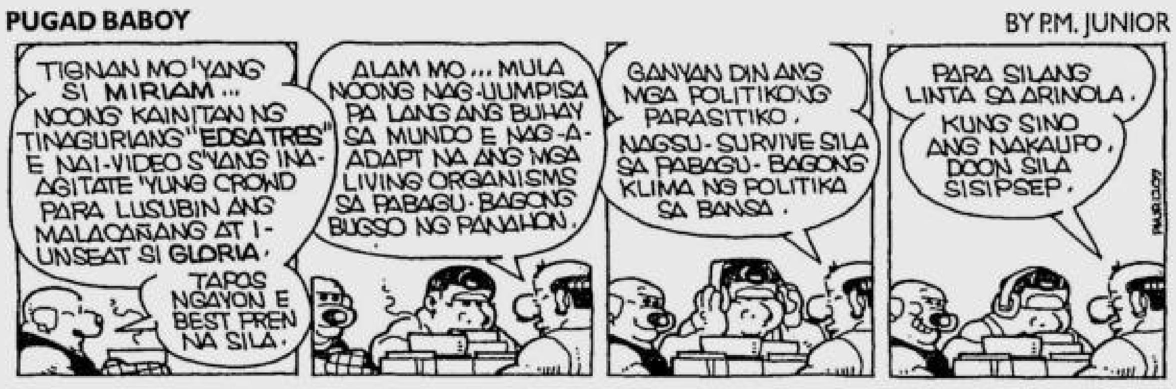
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


PAROL!
PAROL NA LANG ANG KULANG!
MAY MASAMANG BALAK NA NAMAN ITO!

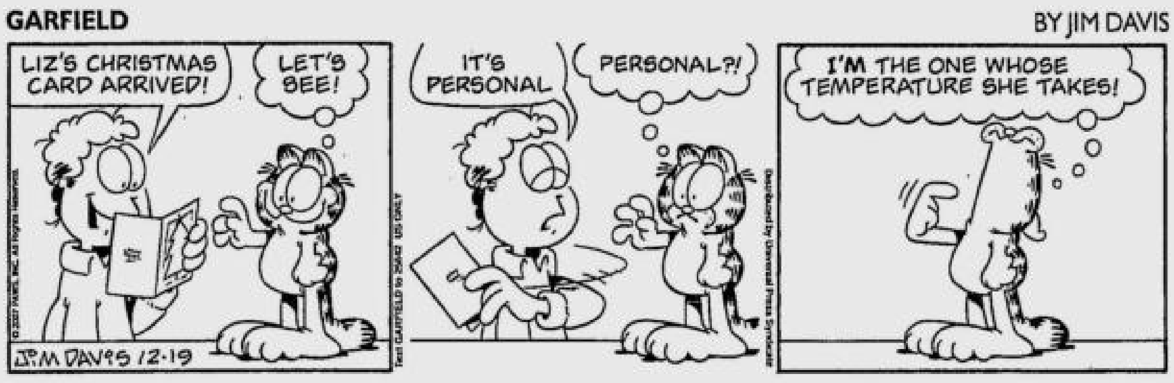
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TIGNAN MO 'YANG SI MIRIAM... NOONG KAINITAN NG TINAGURIANG "EDSA TRES" E NAI-VIDEO S'YANG INA-AGITATE 'YUNG CROWD PARA LUSUBIN ANG MALACAÑANG AT I-UNSEAT SI GLORIA.
TAPOS NGAYON E BEST PREN NA SILA.
ALAM MO... MULA NOONG NAG-UUMPISA PA LANG ANG BUHAY SA MUNDO E NAG-A-ADAPT NA ANG MGA LIVING ORGANISMS SA PABAGU-BAGONG BUGSO NG PANAHON.
GANYAN DIN ANG MGA POLITIKONG PARASITIKO.
NAGSU-SURVIVE SILA SA PABAGU-BAGONG KLIMA NG POLITIKA SA BANSA.
PARA SILANG LINTA SA ARINOLA.
KUNG SINO ANG NAKAUPO, DOON SILA SISIPSEP.

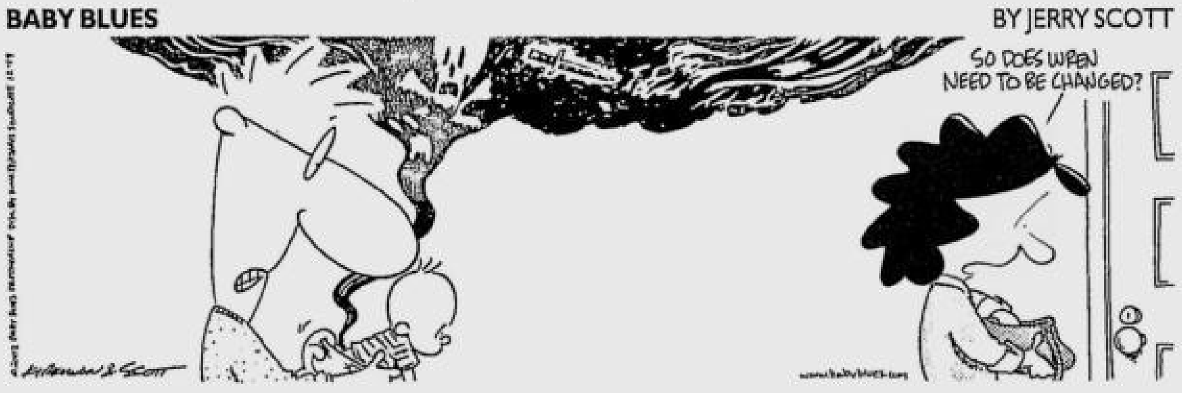
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


LIZ'S CHRISTMAS CARD ARRIVED!
LET'S SEE!
IT'S PERSONAL
PERSONAL?!
I'M THE ONE WHOSE TEMPERATURE SHE TAKES!
JIM DAVIS 12-19

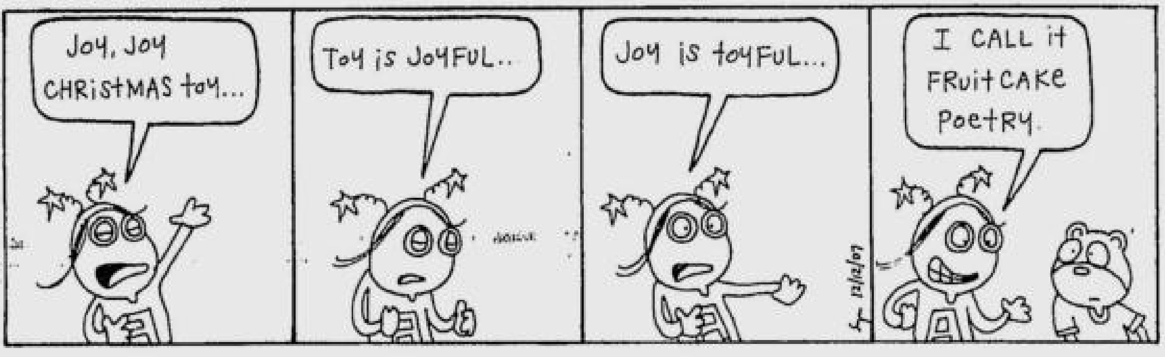
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


SO DOES WREN NEED TO BE CHANGED?

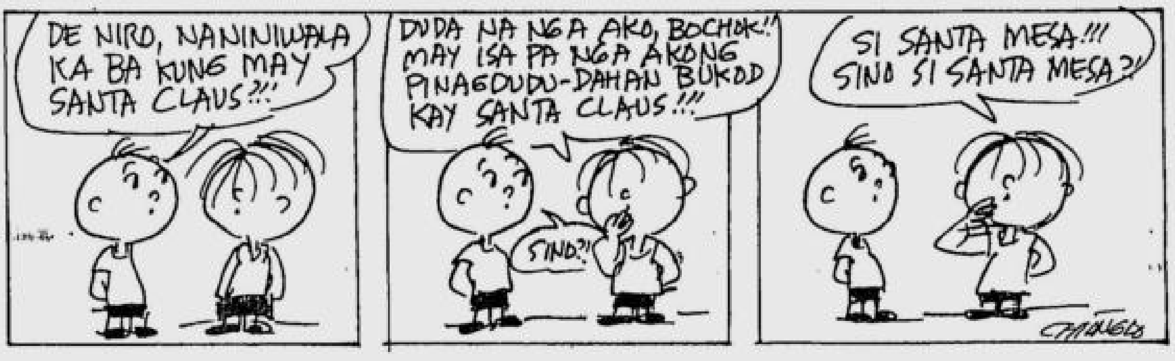
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Joy, Joy CHRISTMAS toy...
Toy is JoyFUL..
Joy is toyFUL...
I CALL it FRUitCAKE PoetRY.

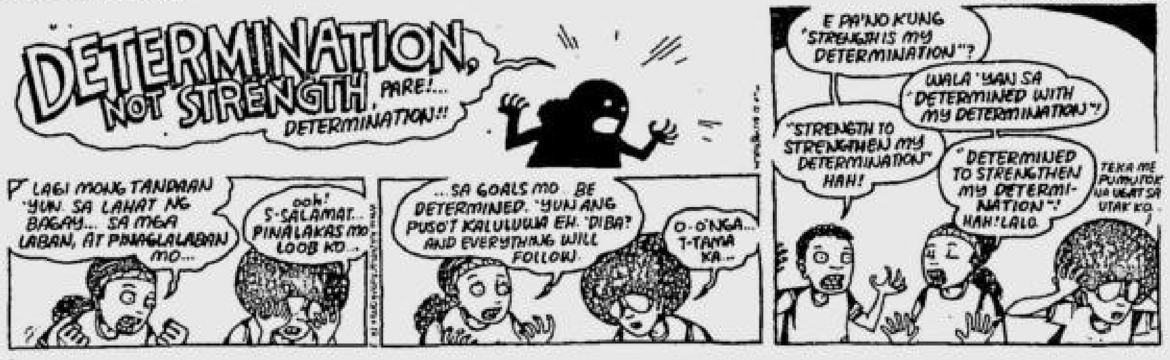
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


DE NIRO, NANINIWALA KA BA KUNG MAY SANTA CLAUS?!!
DUDA NA NGA AKO, BOCHOK!! MAY ISA PA NGA AKONG PINAGDUDU-DAHAN BUKOD KAY SANTA CLAUS!!!
SINO?!
SI SANTA MESA!!! SINO SI SANTA MESA?!
CHIONGLO

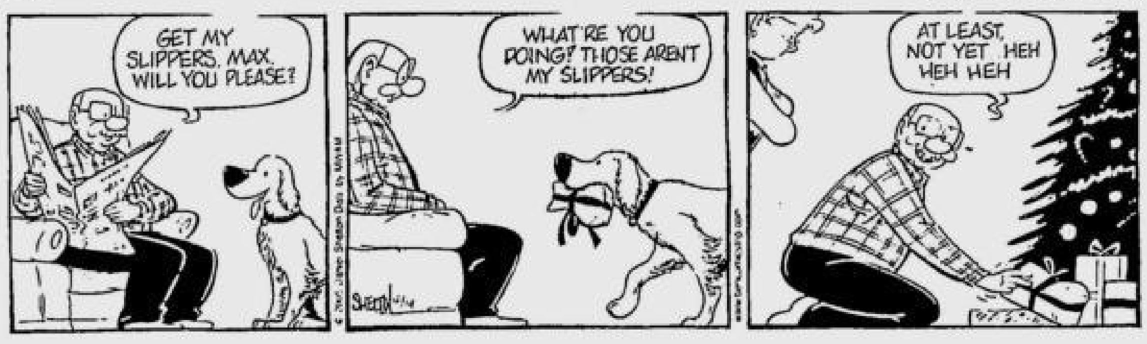
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


DETERMINATION, NOT STRENGTH, PARE!... DETERMINATION!!
LAGI MONG TANDAAN 'YUN SA LAHAT NG BAGAY... SA MGA LABAN, AT PINAGLALABAN MO...
ooh! S-SALAMAT... PINALAKAS MO LOOB KO...
...SA GOALS MO BE DETERMINED. 'YUN ANG PUSO'T KALULUWA EH. 'DIBA? AND EVERYTHING WILL FOLLOW.
O-O'NGA... T-TAMA KA...
E PA'NO KUNG "STRENGTH IS MY DETERMINATION"?
WALA 'YAN SA "DETERMINED WITH MY DETERMINATION"!
"STRENGTH TO STRENGTHEN MY DETERMINATION" HAH!
"DETERMINED TO STRENGTHEN MY DETERMI-NATION"! HAH! LALO.
TEKA ME PUMUTOK NA UGAT SA UTAK KO.

BEN

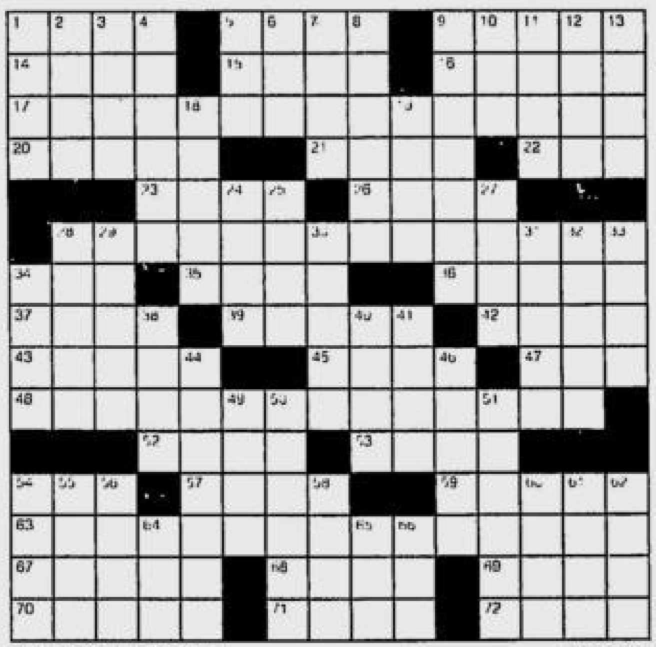
BY DANIEL SHELTON


GET MY SLIPPERS, MAX. WILL YOU PLEASE?
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? THOSE AREN'T MY SLIPPERS!
AT LEAST, NOT YET. HEH HEH HEH

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Stir up
5 Choir member
9 Selassie worshipper, for short
14 Gillette razor
15 Quarter-moon tide
16 Carl of the gridiron
17 Best Director, 1993
20 Postulate
21 Marquis de
22 "History of Rome" author Cassius
23 Loafer or slipper
26 Social affairs
28 1993 movie
34 Golf score
35 Hand over
36 Quilt filler
37 God of love
39 Long stories
42 Catcher Tony
43 More rational
45 Fashion magazine
47 Nile viper
48 1985 movie
52 Art colony in New Mexico
53 Scorch
54 TV spots
57 Small beds
59 Labors
63 2002 movie
67 Obliterate
68 Composer Khachaturian
69 Golfer Ballesteros
70 Painter of ballet dancers
71 Singer Horne
72 Thicket unit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72

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
12/19/07

DOWN

1 Coarse file
2 Football great Graham
3 Peeves
4 Extravagant
5 Sheridan or Sothern
6 Guitarist Paul
7 Bugle call
8 Narcotic
9 Free
10 Mass vestment
11 Musher's vehicle
12 Actress Hatcher
13 Jason's vessel
18 Theory of moral values
19 German river
24 Smallest bills
25 Icelandic poem
27 Lose traction
28 Old-time actress Bernhardt
29 Old hag
30 French cubist Fernand
31 Conception of perfection
32 Have a feeling
33 Snare
34 Annoyance
38 Splinter group
40 Swiss peaks
41 Turn on a pivot
44 Ugly bugs, briefly
46 Muse of poets
49 Weaver's frame
50 Bony
51 Author of "A Remembrance of Things Past"
54 Scored a hole-in-one
55 Challenge
56 Doe's mate
58 Father
60 Cake finisher
61 Wash
62 Old dagger
64 R.E. Lee's nation
65 Summer cooler
66 Singer Sumac

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

T	I	C	■	B	R	O	S	■	S	P	A	R	T	A
A	G	O	■	L	A	V	A	■	H	O	W	A	R	D
R	U	M	M	A	J	O	R	■	I	M	A	G	E	S
S	A	M	U	R	A	I	■	E	M	P	I	R	E	■
U	N	I	T	E	■	D	Y	E	S	■	T	A	L	L
S	A	T	E	■	T	S	A	R	■	A	S	C	I	I
■	■	■	D	O	H	■	R	I	L	L	■	E	N	E
M	A	R	■	R	U	G	D	E	A	L	■	R	E	D
E	T	A	■	E	D	A	M	■	G	Y	M	■	■	■
G	A	F	F	S	■	M	E	R	S	■	E	R	S	T
A	L	T	O	■	B	E	N	E	■	S	T	A	T	E
■	A	B	A	T	E	S	■	S	T	E	R	N	E	R
A	N	E	M	I	A	■	R	A	W	P	O	K	E	R
S	T	E	E	N	S	■	A	L	I	T	■	E	L	O
H	A	R	D	A	T	■	E	T	N	A	■	D	E	R

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12/19/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: Whether your passion is obvious or you choose to play it low-key, you easily strike a chord in others. People respond emotionally to you. You're amazingly resilient. You can overcome big obstacles and still stay on your course. Many people admire you, especially younger people. The year ahead will involve major changes, perhaps as significant as something around 1999.

Birthdate of: Jake Gyllenhaal, actor; Jennifer Beals, actress; Alyssa Milano, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Any kind of study will go extremely well today. You want to get to the bottom of big ideas, especially related to politics, religion and philosophy. You want to introduce good into the world.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your research abilities are astounding today. You'll find whatever you're looking for. You also might discover secrets about your partner's earnings or wealth.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Discussions with others are very intense today. Someone is really ready to lay it all on the line. This means you had better listen! (Oh yeah.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Choose work that requires attention to detail and steady perseverance. You will complete monumental tasks today simply because you set your mind to it. Nothing can stop you.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You can be extremely influential with children and young people today. They will listen to you and follow what you say. Therefore, make sure you have something valuable and wise to offer.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Family discussions are intense. People are inclined to want to improve each other and, of course, this always goes over like a lead balloon. Be careful.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have the mind of a detective today. It's as if you have X-ray vision. You'll be able to spot a phony a mile away.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might come up with an entirely new source of income today. Write down your moneymaking ideas. You certainly can see how to improve your job or how you earn money.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're unusually convincing today. People definitely will step aside to let you go wherever you want. If you're in sales or you teach or act, others will be amazed.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Go after any secrets or useful information you're trying to find. You will find it! Nothing can escape you today. You have the research skills of a genius.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You might encounter a very powerful person today who will likely teach you something. Possibly, you're the powerful person teaching someone else.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Talk to bosses, parents, teachers and authority figures about introducing reform or better ways of doing things. Others will listen to you now. In fact, you are impressed.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu

By Dave Green

		6	2	9	8	5		
	2						9	
4				5				3
7				6				9
9	5			8	3	7		1
3								4
6								2
	9			2			7	
		5	7	1	9	6		

Difficulty Level ★★★
12/19

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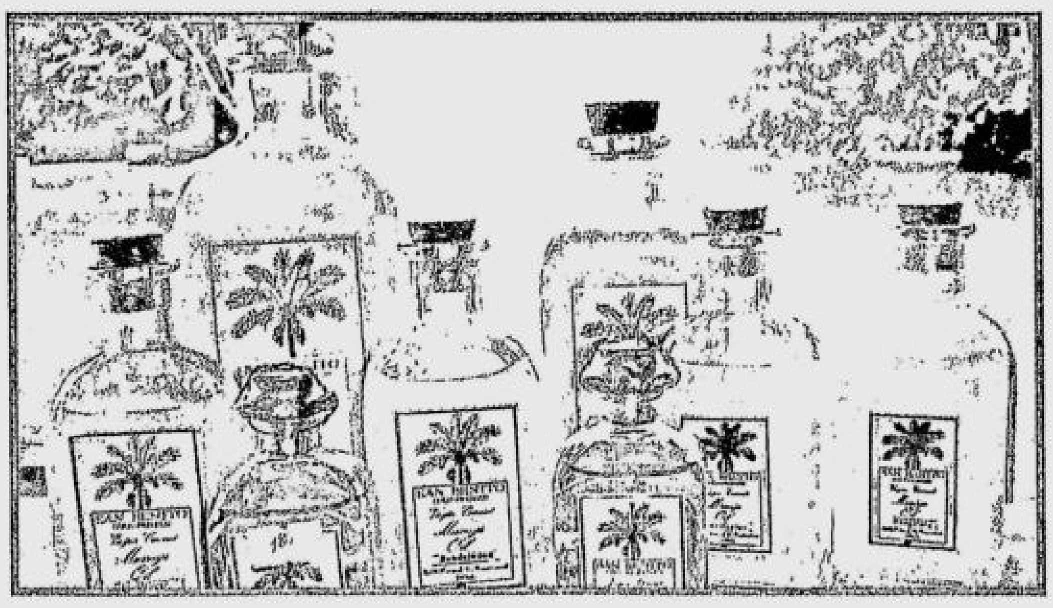
HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

9	2	7	3	4	5	1	8	6
5	6	3	1	8	9	4	2	7
4	1	8	6	7	2	9	5	3
7	5	2	8	3	1	6	9	4
3	9	1	2	6	4	8	7	5
8	4	6	5	9	7	3	1	2
2	8	5	4	1	3	7	6	9
1	3	9	7	5	6	2	4	8
6	7	4	9	2	8	5	3	1

Difficulty Level ★★
12/18



VIRGIN coconut oil produced and sold in The Farm

LEFT: The Farm at San Benito. Right: Healthy food means a healthy lifestyle.

Password
Serena Gelb

Natural beverage and natural health

The Farm in San Benito has developed its own set of health juices

LAST WEEKEND, I VISITED the Farm in San Benito. It is a beautiful oasis of lush greenery in Lipa City, Batangas.

It's not too far away—a little less than a two-hour drive from Manila (depending on the unpredictable traffic, of course). It has large grounds to explore or jog in; a lovely spa with excellent, well-trained (and strong) therapists; a clinic (that offers treatments of blood analysis, colonics, etc); and an extremely healthy 100-percent vegan restaurant.

Some people feel like they have to travel across the seas to Hawaii or Bali to get away from the smog of the big city. But, actually, you will get the same experience in The Farm. It's clean, green and serene! There's no pollution and your lungs can just breathe.

"You cannot get any closer to Eden than this," said one of the Farm's many guests. The motto over there is "Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food." One great thing about the food there is that 85-percent of it is "live" or raw.

Raw foods, according to chef Napoleon Arrieta, contain enzymes that cooked foods do not.

Enzymes are crucial catalysts for every bodily function and are present in a perfect balance in all raw foods provided by nature.

Enzymes are destroyed by heating foods above 42°, Arrieta added. He shared with me some delightful recipes and tips for a healthier lifestyle.

Everything that comes out of their kitchen is not only healthy, it's also extremely delicious. And the setting is breathtaking: there is an open-air terrace, overlooking the green canopy of a tropical rainforest.

"It's an experience that you have to taste to believe," a guest said.

Green Juice

Their signature drink, the "Green Juice", is a blend of fresh greens and *buko*, and is extremely healthy.

The green color may not appeal to everyone's eyes, and at first it may take some willpower to gulp it down, but the drink is quite yummy. If you're in the mood for a health shake that is a little more fun, try one of the simple and easy recipes below!

Every morning for breakfast, I would start with *muesli* (swill cereal with fruit and yogurt) and accompany it with their "Chocolate Vitalizer." It's like a healthy chocolate milkshake.

All you need are some bananas, nut milk (such as almond milk, or even soy milk—you can buy them at Healthy Options in Serendra or other locations), carob, cinnamon, *buko* meat, some chocolate cream and a bit of salt. It's very easy to make, since you just put all of the ingredients in a blender and blend thoroughly.

1 pc banana
½ c nut milk (soy, almond)
1 tsp carob (optional)
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ c *buko* meat
½ tbsp honey
1 tbsp chocolate powder (unsweetened)
Pinch of salt (optional for additional electrolytes)

Exotica

Another favorite of mine is called "Exotica." With pineapples, *buko* juice, bananas and honey, it truly has the taste of the tropics all mixed into a fruity shake!

1 slice pineapple
½ c *buko* juice
½ pc orange
1 pc banana
½ pc pear or apple (optional)
½ tbsp honey
1 tbsp lime juice
Pinch of salt (optional)

(Again, make sure you blend all of the ingredients thoroughly.)

Pop quiz! What is the iconic symbol in the tropical archipelago of the Philippines?

Palm trees and coconuts of course (or *buko* as we Filipinos call them)!

Buko juice with tender *buko* meat is tasty, refreshing and nutritious. It is a staple in my diet. In fact, Virgin Coconut Oil (which The Farm uses in its cooking, massage oil and facial products) is acclaimed by some as the healthiest food product in the world.

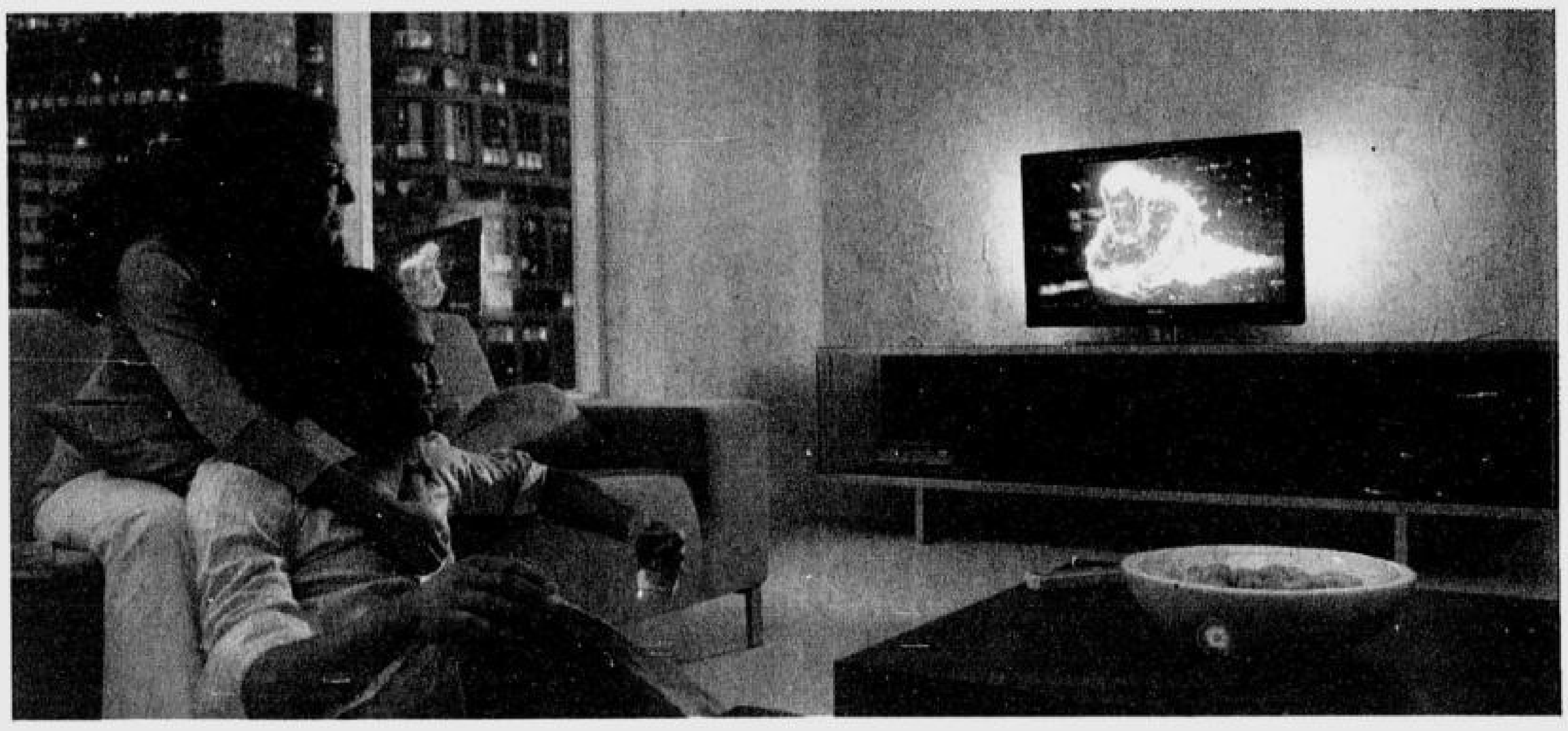
Even my American dad says "A *buko* a day keeps the doctor away." Nothing quenches one's thirst more than a fresh *buko* shake, and it is possibly one of the easiest shakes to make. All you need is a *buko*, lime, honey and salt.

Buko Shake

½ c *buko* meat
¾ c *buko* juice
1 tbsp lime
½ tbsp honey (optional)
Pinch of salt (optional)

All of the above drinks will leave you cooled and refreshed on any hot, muggy Manila day, and are fast and easy to make. So, what are you waiting for?

Visit http://thefarm.com.ph
E-mail the author at serenaswam@gmail.com



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Oishi

Make sweet music this Christmas

Sony Ericsson
W910I

From page E1

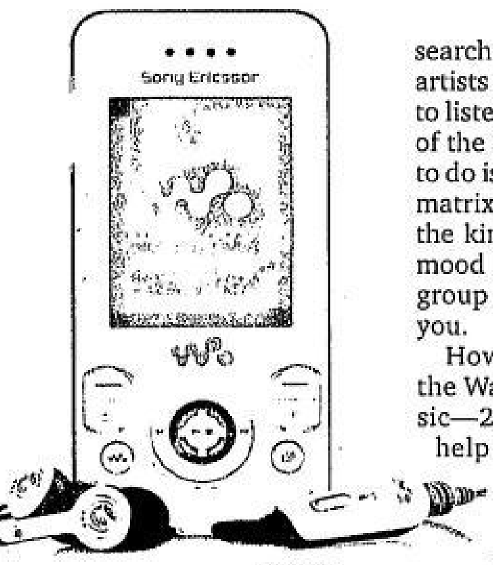
song you like on the radio but didn't quite catch the title, you can use the patented TrackID technology to find what the song is.

Just record a few seconds of the track, and phone will zero in on the beats and melodies of the song and help you identify it by sending a clip to the Gracenote Mobile MusicID database. After finally finding out the title and artist of the song, you can use the Disc2Phone music management software to transfer it to your unit after downloading it from your computer.

Hardcore music fans can also add music accessories to their Walkman phones. Two sets of optional speakers—the Portable Speakers MPS-70 and Snap-on Speakers MPS-75—help you share your music with your friends (instead of keeping your earphones on the whole day).

Take high tech a step further with the Bluetooth Music Receiver, which allows you to play phone music directly through a home stereo (you can use your phone to skip through tracks and adjust the volume).

The new phones also feature Shake Control, which allows users to change tracks by shaking the cell phone like a pinball machine. Skip one song forward by flicking your phone to the right, or take a step backwards by shaking it to the left. Shuffle your playlist by shaking it back and forth.



W580I

Another feature to check out is SensMe, which allows you to search your music collection and create playlists by basing them on tempo and style, which can be more practical than searching for songs based on artists and albums if you want to listen to a varied mix of songs of the same genre. All you have to do is to go by the phone's dot-matrix system in order to track the kind of music you're in the mood for, and SensMe will group the tracks together for you.

However, there's more to the Walkman phones than music—2-megapixel cameras can help you catch goofy moments fast, while 3G technology (for the W660i and W990i) allows video conferencing; 3D games like The Sims also make for hours of endless entertainment.

While there's plenty of room for pure entertainment, the phones don't lack on serious features, such as high-speed web surfing. Check your e-mail at the click of a button, or take a video call from your boss—it's all possible.

To be able to maximize all the features of the phone, you'll need a lot of battery.

Thankfully, the battery life of the phones last long, so you can go for days without charging.

Also, while we don't encourage dropping your phones every day, you can be sure that your Sony Ericsson unit won't fall apart on a single fall. In the case of the Walkman phones, style and substance aren't exclusive of each other.

E-mail the author at bianca-consunji@yahoo.com

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5094 series of 2007

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*Log on to: www.cebupacificair.com/dwnload/go_mc_ticketoffice.doc to view participating Cebu Pacific ticket offices.

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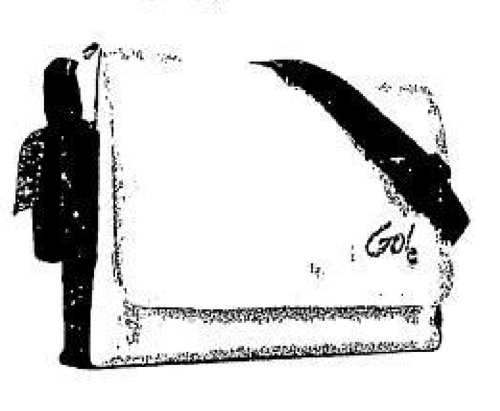

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Santa's alive!

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

IF I HAD BEEN A BOY, I probably would've gotten into a fistfight back in the fourth grade.

It was our first day of classes after the Christmas break, and like any normal kid, I brought my holiday loot to school so I could show off to my classmates. I was proudly displaying the piece de resistance of my collection—a Barbie tea set from Santa Claus—when Katherine, a scrawny, bug-eyed kid, rolled her eyes and said, "You're such a baby."

The high-pitched giggles of the cluster of girls abruptly stopped. I'd just been pointing out the finer points of the pink glaze on the Barbie teapot, but my speech died on my lips.

"Why?" I asked her, setting down the porcelain teacups.

"There's no such thing as Santa Claus," she said, sneering. "Last year, I waited until midnight and saw my dad putting my gift under the tree. Your parents are just fooling you."

"Well, you're wrong," I retorted, resisting the urge to smash the dainty cups over her head. "You just don't believe in Santa Claus, that's why you don't get gifts."

> He might have stopped leaving gifts under the tree, but he left an infinitely better legacy—one that has lasted long after the sleek chrome trucks and pink-cheeked dolls lost their splendor

We stood in the middle of our fourth grade classroom, glaring at each other. Thankfully, the bell rang for the first period. There was no time to taunt each other over our respective beliefs. I scooped up my loot, stared blankly at the board during math class, and by the time it was recess, forgot all about the Santa Claus episode.

Best handwriting

The next Christmas, I wrote a long, highly decorated letter to Santa Claus. I asked for Sweet Valley books and Sailor Moon goodies. It was written on bond paper and illustrated with reindeer, Christmas trees, and pointy-eared elves decked out in peaked hats. It was probably the least outstanding of all the letters I had sent to Santa, which were always written out in my best handwriting and smothered in glitter glue and stickers.

I had no idea that the letter was to be the last of a series of letters to Santa, which all maintained that I had been on my best behavior throughout the year (despite repeatedly being caught reading books under the desk during lessons). Thus, the letters affirmed, I deserved the toys and trinkets that I gazed at wistfully in the department store when my mom took me shopping for clothes.

ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

But after that Christmas, adolescence set in, and boys, music and clothes interested me more than candy canes, toys, and the sparkling snow of the North Pole. I still half-believed in Santa Claus, but I wasn't going to admit it to any of my friends.

So come Christmas morning, as my little sister unwrapped her presents from Santa Claus, I pretended to be aloof, but watched enviously from a distance. Then I saw something that ruined the Santa Claus of my childhood: a stark white price tag on my sister's present, which she didn't notice in the confusion of bright ribbons and glossy gift wrap.

My mom, who had seen my stunned expression, took the gift from my sister and discreetly peeled off the price tag before she noticed anything amiss.

Sad Christmas

The next year, I played it cool. I went up to my mom and asked her if I could

SANTA'S/ F2

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Molly, my twin

By Irene C. Perez

HUBIE® TOYS
MOLLY

THE AUTHOR and Molly, Christmas 1989. Inset: Molly's original tag kept in a scrapbook

I HAVE BEEN SLEEPING WITH A stuffed bear for 17 years. Childish for someone in her mid-20s, you might think, but she is still the best Christmas present I have gotten to date.

A European trip might be the only thing that could top her (or a Chanel 2.55), although I am not even sure of that.

People, meet Molly, my stress ball, "shrink" and pretty much my surrogate sibling. I can still remember how I thanked and kissed my mum when she gave me the huge gift, how my heart raced as I tore off the red foil and was the happiest, chubbiest 8-year-old that Christmas of 1989. She has been my roommate since.

Ate Leng, my older cousin, baptized her "Molly," from Demi Moore's character in "Ghost." I didn't see the movie till I was in high school, on VHS—or was it Betamax?—because I was shooed off the theater, and the same cousin was so disappointed that she dropped me home and watched the movie with our other cousins, sniff.

> Molly may just be a teddy bear, but I don't know how I could have survived deaths, adolescence, taxes without the calm she's given me

17 YEARS later

IRENE PEREZ

Remember the time when everyone had that cropped 'do and "Unchained Melody" was the coolest song known to man? That's when Molly was born.

Best pal

Molly has seen everything about me. I hugged her tight when I freaked out after I got my period. She was with me and my mom while we were bawling our eyes out the morning after my dad died, when I was 12 and we both couldn't get out of bed. She saw me being bullied in grade school. She heard me purging after every meal in high school, scared that no gown would fit me come prom night.

There was also a time when Molly was "banned." Blame my dermatologist, she suspected that my major acne breakout during fifth grade was caused by the "toy." But I refused that she be kept in the cabinet, so my mom and I agreed that Molly should stay somewhere near the headboard, but no hugging or contact of any sort was allowed.

She was there while I prepared for every graduation, recognition and awarding ceremony from prep school till college. She saw me through teen angst, through drunk and insomniac nights. She kept me company when my mom and I had a falling out (tough times for an only child), until all the dramatics were waived and we patched things up in college.

And Molly caught the tears that first love and first, ehem, heartbreak brought a few years back (yeah, I'm a pathetic late-bloomer). She also knows the real score behind the "partial, unofficial relationships," all the way to the legit one I have been happily keeping for almost two years now.

Molly has seen me grow up through being bullied to being the bully, through geekhood to gaining some cool, through a seesaw of weight gain and loss that could rival Oprah's, not to mention being a hair-treatment junkie with abused hair that has been straightened, permed, relaxed, rebonded, rehabbed.

She is the keeper of secrets and fantasies—from the hardcore to stuff my (or your) mother would rather not know, stuff that aren't 2bU!-friendly and I'd rather not see print (wink, wink).

A then-5-year-old nephew asked me: "*Pano si* Molly *'pag nag-asawa ka na?*" I told him: "I don't know."

I get withdrawal symptoms when I sleep away from her for long periods. But I don't think she's fit to be an heirloom piece no matter how vintage she is.

Her stuffing has been compressed from years worth of embrace so she's a quarter less of her original size, her tongue was lost over the years, and her color has shifted from orange to brown, white to gray.

Still, she is my comfort zone and it will be her debut next year (*dalaga na*). I greet her happy birthday every Christmas eve, and make it a point to wash her well beforehand.

Molly may just be a teddy bear, but she is love, and I don't know how I could have survived deaths, adolescence, taxes without the calm she's given me.

E-mail the author at iperez@inquirer.com.ph

Santa's alive

From page F1

help set up the presents for my two younger siblings, who had excitedly written their letters to Santa. She agreed, but in the rush of the holidays, forgot to take me along during the shopping trip for "Santa's presents."

So on Christmas Eve, faced with the prospect of two disappointed siblings the next morning, I rambled through the house in search of trinkets and candy. Anything that could pass for a Santa Claus gift.

It was past midnight when I set down a badly wrapped action figure for my brother, and a cheap plastic doll for my sister. "They'll feel bad about Santa this year," I told my mom, sighing.

There were the beginnings of fine lines around her eyes, and she looked tired. "It's okay," she said. "They're getting old anyway. Besides, we got them other gifts so maybe they won't be as disappointed with their Santa Claus presents."

I shrugged and went to my room after taking one last look at the forlorn presents under the tree. "That's a sad way to stop believing in Santa Claus."

The next morning, I woke up early, as I had done on other Christmas mornings. But there was no reason for me to jump out of bed, no breathless anticipation of shiny toys and sweets. I lay still, staring at the ceiling and wondering what adults did on Christmas mornings.

I was just about to wriggle back under the blankets for another hour of sleep when my brother burst into the room with a round of loud whoops, followed by my equally excited sister. They pulled off my blankets and hopped around the bed.

"We got our presents! We got our presents!"

"Fine," I said, clambering back to the comfort of my bed. "So open them."

"You're just jealous because you didn't write to Santa Claus this year," my sister giggled. "But come down with us!"

Wondering what was so exciting about cheap plastic toys, I followed my siblings to the living room. There, nestled under the tree, were two boxes wrapped in gold foil; two cards covered with elaborate cursive handwriting were perched atop the presents.

I sucked in my breath. "I can't believe it!" I ran to the boxes and ran my finger over the matte gold paper. "Santa Claus is real!"

Youthful revelry

The hour that followed was a flurry of bright ribbons and scraps of paper flying into the air. There were dolls with pink cheeks and rainbow-colored stickers and stationery sets for my sisters, while my brother got tiny model airplanes and sleek chrome trucks. The stockings they had hung on the tree were crammed with peppermints and butterscotch candy and chocolate, which we all started on immediately.

"Hey, you haven't had your breakfast yet," dad protested when he saw us with our mouths full of caramel.

At 13, I was already starting to get clothes and perfume for Christmas, but I joined in the youthful revelry of my siblings and their giddiness that Santa Claus came through once again.

That night, I pulled out my journal. "Today was magical," I wrote. "And Santa Claus is real. I woke up thinking the day would just be another ordinary one, but I think that for anyone who believes, the magic of Christmas is real."

A few months later, I eventually realized that my parents were really behind the Santa Claus gifts, but there were no disappointments left, only contentment. I was duped for another year, but that last gullible Christmas morning proved to be one of the best gifts I have ever received.

It's been 10 years since then, but Santa still lurks around on Christmas morning at our house. Since then, I've been staying up until the early hours of the morning, waiting for the carols to stop playing and for the giggles to subside. Then, I bring out my sack of secret goodies.

My siblings know that it's no longer Santa who fills their socks with jellybeans and chocolate (and the occasional lumpy potato or evil-smelling onion) but we all play along on Christmas morning, shaking all the gifts under the tree and having chocolate for breakfast.

Santa might have stopped leaving elaborately wrapped gifts under the tree, but he left an infinitely better legacy that Christmas—one that has lasted long after the sleek chrome trucks and pink-cheeked dolls lost their splendor.

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

The Gift of Fine Quality PEARLS for Christmas

With the spirit of gift giving and the holidays just around the corner, it's time to spread joy and glad tidings to the people we love and all the women of our lives. Metro Gaisano Jewelry dept. aides you in this arduous task: shopping for the perfect gift. Treasuring her with the gift of fine quality pearls would surely bring a swell of joy to her heart and a tear of happiness to her eye.

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For Your Mom
This year spoil your Mom and splurge for a princess-length necklace, or perhaps a gorgeous South Sea Pearl earrings set with diamonds.

The South Sea Pearl is one of the most exotic item a woman can own. A striking jewelry piece- whichever is your choice, your mom will be taken aback by your thoughtfulness.

For Your Grandma
Recognize her with the elegance that she deserves: Give her a classic Tahitian black pearl pendant or earrings set in diamonds. Also exotic and eye catching, they are treasured for their rare natural black color and looks especially good on a person of age.

For your Daughter(s)
Pearl earrings are a near perfect gift. Earrings also match any outfit, from formal wear to a pair of jeans, the right pair of earrings match beautifully to any occasion.

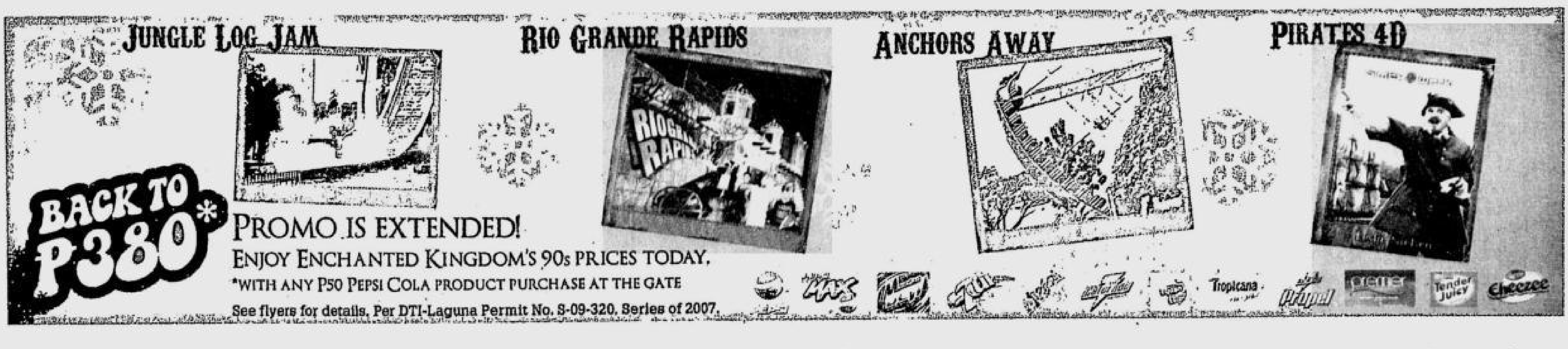
Choose from Studs, Hoops and Dangling Pearl Earrings

Studs - are classic and easy to wear. They are perfect with a classic suit, dress or casual jeans.

Hoops - Hoop pearl earrings adds a feminine touch with their graceful curves.

Dangling - moves with the wearer and are always eye catching. Gives the wearer a refined and sophisticated look.

Whatever pearl item you choose for the women of your life, Metro Jewelry Dept. offers you our wide variety of items. Come visit us at the ground floor Metro Market! Market! Department Store at Fort Bonifacio Global City. Also available in Metro Legazpi & Metro Lucena stores.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Party for all ages

When lolo's real age was finally established, the family gathered for a reunion to celebrate age, wisdom and life

NELLY PANGILINAN

FOUR generations in their first family-reunion photo

By Fran de la Rosa Katigbak

UNTIL LAST YEAR, nobody knew how old or exactly when my grandfather, Marciano, was born.

One of his daughters, in an attempt to complete requirements for his passport application, discovered that records since the 1920s at the municipal hall in Lolo Ciano's Lipa hometown had been lost and were thus irretrievable.

Although the family would celebrate on the month he was supposedly born, Lolo Ciano's age had always been some sort of a guessing game. If anyone asked, his children would tentatively reply: "*Ah, nasa mga otsenta yata* (He's in his 80s)."

It was the same answer every year. He would have more wrinkles, develop poorer eyesight, become hard of hearing yet he remained in the same age bracket.

After Lolo Ciano's children finally got hold of a copy of his birth certificate from the church where he was married, the clan arranged a big bash.

LOLA Carmen and Lolo Ciano

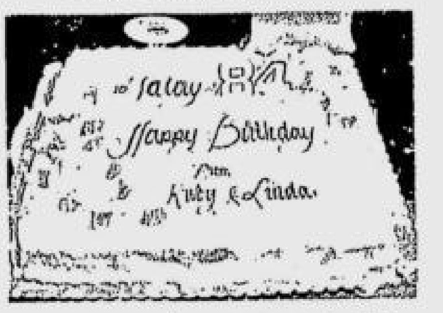
FRAN KATIGBAK

Not only did the family invite the entire barangay in Clark, Paniqui, Tarlac, my mom and I even had to head south to fetch relatives from Batangas. Among them was Lola Carmen, one of my grandfather's two surviving siblings.

Biggest reunion

The birthday party turned out to be the biggest Katigbak reunion I could remember. While I missed the relatives who were based overseas, I could not help but be overwhelmed by the faces around me. We were four generations—the youngest, Lolo Ciano's great granddaughter Avelaine, had been christened also on the day of the celebrations.

I was used to reunions, Christmas parties and countless picture-taking sessions in my mom's side of the family. Most of them live in the city and have an easier time showing up at such gatherings.



BIRTHDAY cake with the right digits

FRAN KATIGBAK

It took quite an effort to bring Lolo Ciano's family together. So despite the sweaty uncles who had been cooking the endless buffet refill in *kawas* (very large cooking instruments) at the backyard, aunts insistent they were too *sabog* to face the camera, and shy cousins who couldn't be lifted off their seats, I managed to drag everyone together for our very first family-reunion picture.

The date was Jan. 20, 2006, the day Lolo Ciano turned 84. Christmas was over but it sure felt just as festive.

E-mail the author at fkatigbak@inquirer.com.ph

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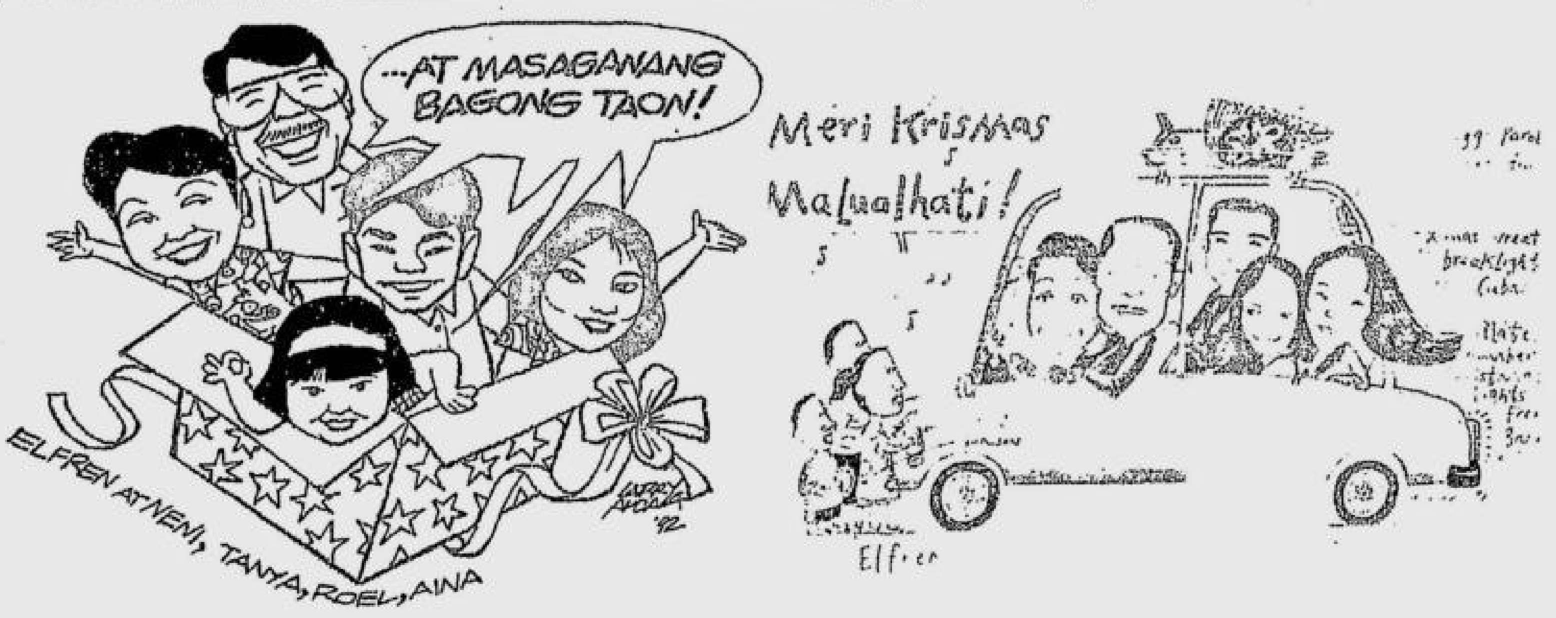
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CREATIVE CHRISTMAS CARDS
"Our family Christmas cards started when I was just 2 years old," said 25-year-old Aina Cruz. "As the years passed, my mom became more creative and asked artists such as Larry Alcala to make caricatures of us. We use a photo of a significant event that happened within that year to anyone of us in the family." Featured here are illustrations by Larry Alcala and by Dindo Llana for the book " You Know You're Filipino If" written by the author's mom.

Nothing new

I've realized that even if we celebrate Christmas the same way every year, it's really the family that matters

By Arianne Jenille Manzo

DEAR ATE PAOLA,

That is what really happens when all the funds are gone and your mind is not working. You go to your last resort, then consider that money after all is a probable gift this Christmas.

Besides, we were made to grow up with the idea that the thought behind the gift is more important than the gift itself. So, how are you there and everyone else?

I know what you are going to say, there is nothing new.

I know there is no memorable Christmas for us, really. Or, there is nothing special in the way we celebrate Christmas. I have come to accept the fact that we celebrate Christmas like how we celebrate every other Christmas. Sarcastic? But yes, it is the usual, the norm and the tradition.

Funny how our last year's Christmas—or even last, last year's—was pretty much similar to the other Christmases we've had. Mommy has never missed any Simbang Gabi for four consecutive years now.

The yearly Christmas Eve Mass would always be there. The same food will be prepared for the same people. We will still have our dinner with Nanay for Christmas and in Mamang for our lunch.

Maybe, it is only Lola Bin's *pamasko* that's changing. But we're still shy and silent whenever we visit her.

It has all been the same. But maybe not this year. Changes might occur, you never know. I haven't been home for six months, the longest that I've been away from home. Thanks to my selfish reason to beg mommy and daddy to let me join a competition.

Sometimes, we just have to let ourselves miss something in order to really appreciate it.

Because of this reason, I am dying to go home, Ate. I can't even believe how fulfilling putting an X mark on the calendar every day can be. I've never missed home like this. Of course that would surprise you.

Me? Dying to go home? Go on, laugh your heart out. You would never know how waking up alone for six months can be really saddening.

For six months, the dying to be independent like me has received her independence. Friends and going out can be helpful sometimes. But the Yuletide drama has bitten me already. I am hurt? Ouch!

Even if Mommy would still be noisy in order to wake up some people in the house, at least I am going to wake up to the voice I've been longing to hear for six months now. Neither the jeeps nor their howling drivers would interrupt my sleep now. I know we'd still go to church together.

At least, this time, I'd be with someone else and not on my own. The same food will be prepared, but it's real food and not fast-food crap.

We'd still spend our Christmas Eve with Nanay and lunch with Mamang, but this also means seeing our family and extended family all together. I know we will still go to Lola Bin's house and would receive *pamasko*. We'd still be shy and silent, I know, but let the money roll in.

As I write here inside a fast-food resto, face in front of a mirror while eating fries, an excited smile is plastered on my face. Here I am alone, but my mind has drifted all the way to South Cotabato.

Christmas jingles are everywhere here in Cebu. You should see the Christmas lights displayed along the street. I actually want to destroy them, for they remind me that Christmas is just a few days away. And the bazaar? My P50 gift will go somewhere here, after all.

I know we'll still have the same Christmas lights, tree and decor. I'll bet that spaghetti and fried chicken will still be on our Christmas Eve table. But I miss home, badly.

I've realized that even if we celebrate Christmas the same way every year, it's really the family that matters. Nothing's new with the coming Christmas, and am I glad for that.

I miss you, Ate, and everyone else there. I hope you keep the P50 bill.

JENILLE

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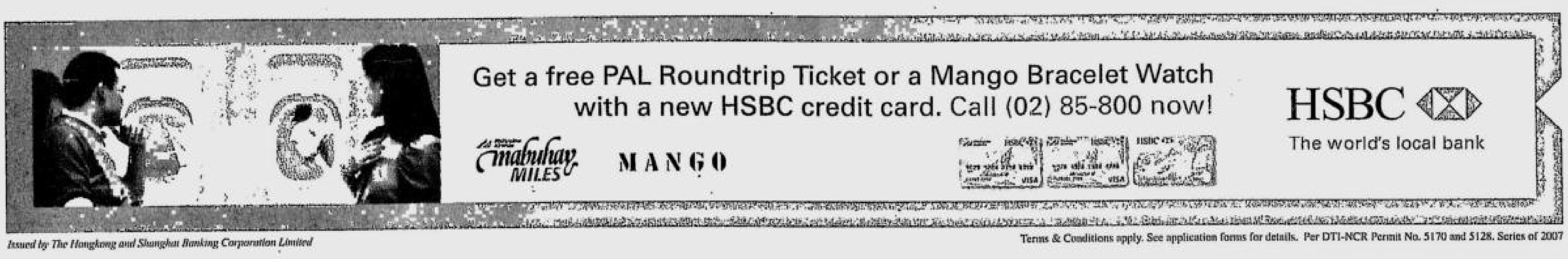
INSIDE

Nobody knew Ace Vergel had a heart ailment, except his son/ H4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S'porean is first 'Asian Idol'

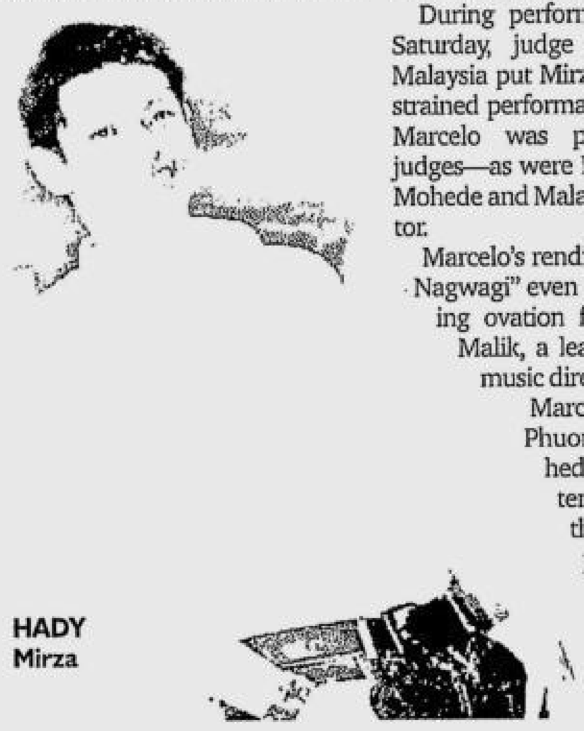
But Pinoys still consider Mau Marcelo a winner

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photo courtesy of www.theasianidol.tv

SINGAPOREAN Hady Mirza's "Asian Idol" win on Sunday night has been described as a "surprise" or "upset" victory.

The 27-year-old bested five other "Idols" from around the region, including Filipina Mau Marcelo, in the singing tilt held in Jakarta.

Apart from bragging rights as the first Asian Idol, Mirza won a world tour.



HADY Mirza

He told Channel News Asia on Monday, "Winning was never on my mind … especially since I was up against contestants with better vocal [skills]. I just wanted to do Singapore proud."

During performance night on Saturday, judge Paul Moss of Malaysia put Mirza to task for his strained performance. In contrast, Marcelo was praised by the judges—as were Indonesia's Mike Mohede and Malaysia's Jaclyn Victor.

Marcelo's rendition of "Ako ang Nagwagi" even merited a standing ovation from judge Anu Malik, a leading Bollywood music director.

Marcelo, Vietnam's Phuong Vy and Mohede were consistently in the top three of an online poll conducted in the competition's official website.

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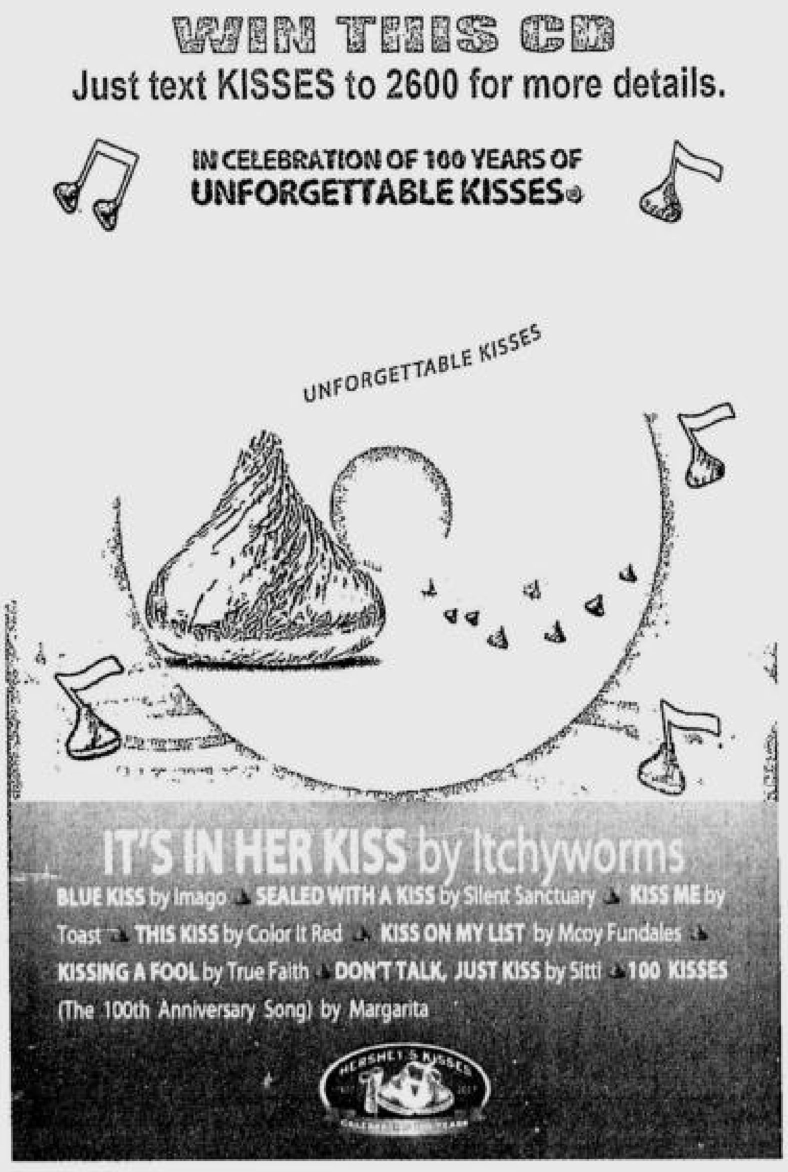
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METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2007

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2008.)

'Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo'

Star Cinema
Stars: **Judy Ann Santos, Ryan Agoncillo, Gina Pareño, Soliman Cruz, Ariel Ureta and Gloria Diaz**
Directed by Jose Javier Reyes

Santos and Agoncillo reprise their roles as Angie and Jed in this sequel to the 2006 MMFF top-grosser "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo." The film takes off when Angie and Jed's son turns 4. The couple, burdened by the demands of parenthood, decide to leave their child in the care of friends to go abroad. This causes consternation to their moms who insisted that they take turns in taking care of the child, an arrangement that leads to disaster.

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The Philippine Montessori Music Ensemble
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DECEMBER 18, Tuesday
"Munggawit Colors of Christmas"
La Salle Greenhills Grade School / Munggawit Songsters
Grand Atrium, 6:00 pm

"Kundirana Joy"
La Salle Greenhills Kundirana 2008
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 19, Wednesday
"Echoes of Christmas"
Sinag Primary and Intermediate Chorale
St. Theresa's College Q.C.
Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm

"Opera Babies"
Philippine Opera Company
7:00 pm

DECEMBER 20, Thursday
"A Christmas Serenade"
Jonathan Badon with Trio Ensemble
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 21, Friday
"Little Voices of Christmas"
Ateneo Grade School (Primary School)
Grand Atrium, 6:00 pm

"The Nutcracker"
Ballet Manila and Liza Macuja-Elizalde
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

"Image Band"
Streetscape, 10:00 pm

DECEMBER 22, Saturday
"Christmas in the Air"
Manila Symphony Orchestra
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 23, Sunday
"Christmas Sea Adventure"
Trumpets Musicademy
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 24, Monday
"Christmas Melodies"
Pizzicato String Quartet
Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm

DECEMBER 28, Friday
"A Resounding Christmas"
PPO Brass Quintet
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

"Rockin Revival"
Streetscape, 10:00 pm

DECEMBER 29, Saturday
"Holiday Tidings"
PPO String Ensemble
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 30, Sunday
"Woodwind Sonatas"
PPO Woodwind Quintet
Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm

DECEMBER 31, Monday
"Melodies of the Season"
Trio Royale
Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm

JANUARY 5, Saturday
"A Glorious New Year"
Kithara Guitar Quartet
Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm

JANUARY 6, Sunday
"Sounds of the New Year"
The UP Concert Chorus
Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm

For details, please call 633-7851 local 113/153.
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4 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE
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6 BATANES
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8 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
9 HITMAN
10 ENCHANTED

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2 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
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4 ENCHANTED
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6 HITMAN
7 BATANES

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2 MARTIAN CHILD
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

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8 HOOD of HORROR

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3 HOOD of HORROR
4 BATANES

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3 THE KINGDOM
4 BATANES

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3 GHOST SON
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3 BATANES / GREEN PARADISE

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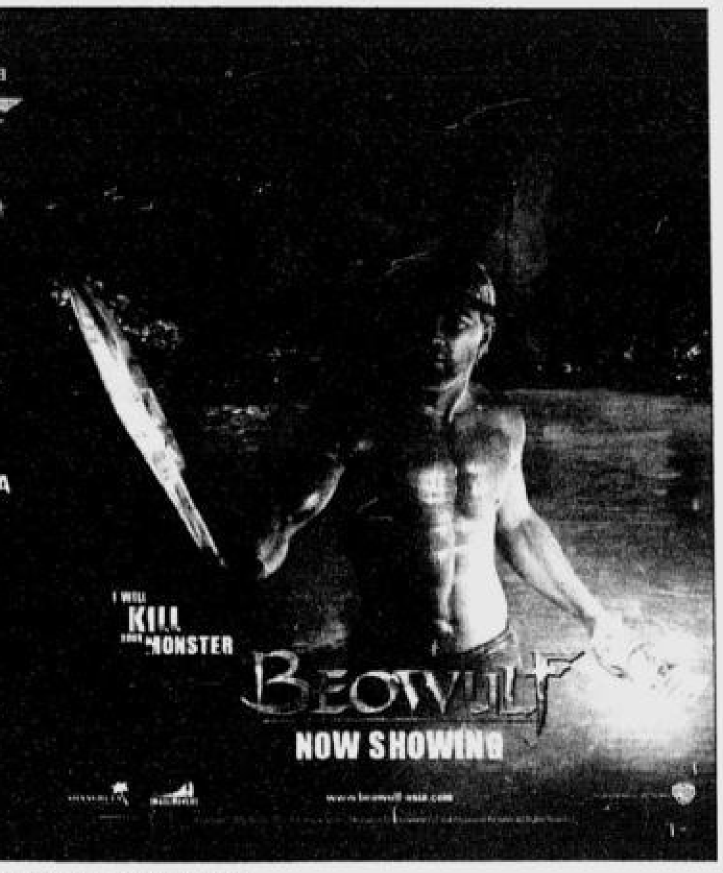

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9 HITMAN
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11 MARTIAN CHILD
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3 GOLDEN COMPASS
4 CATACOMBS

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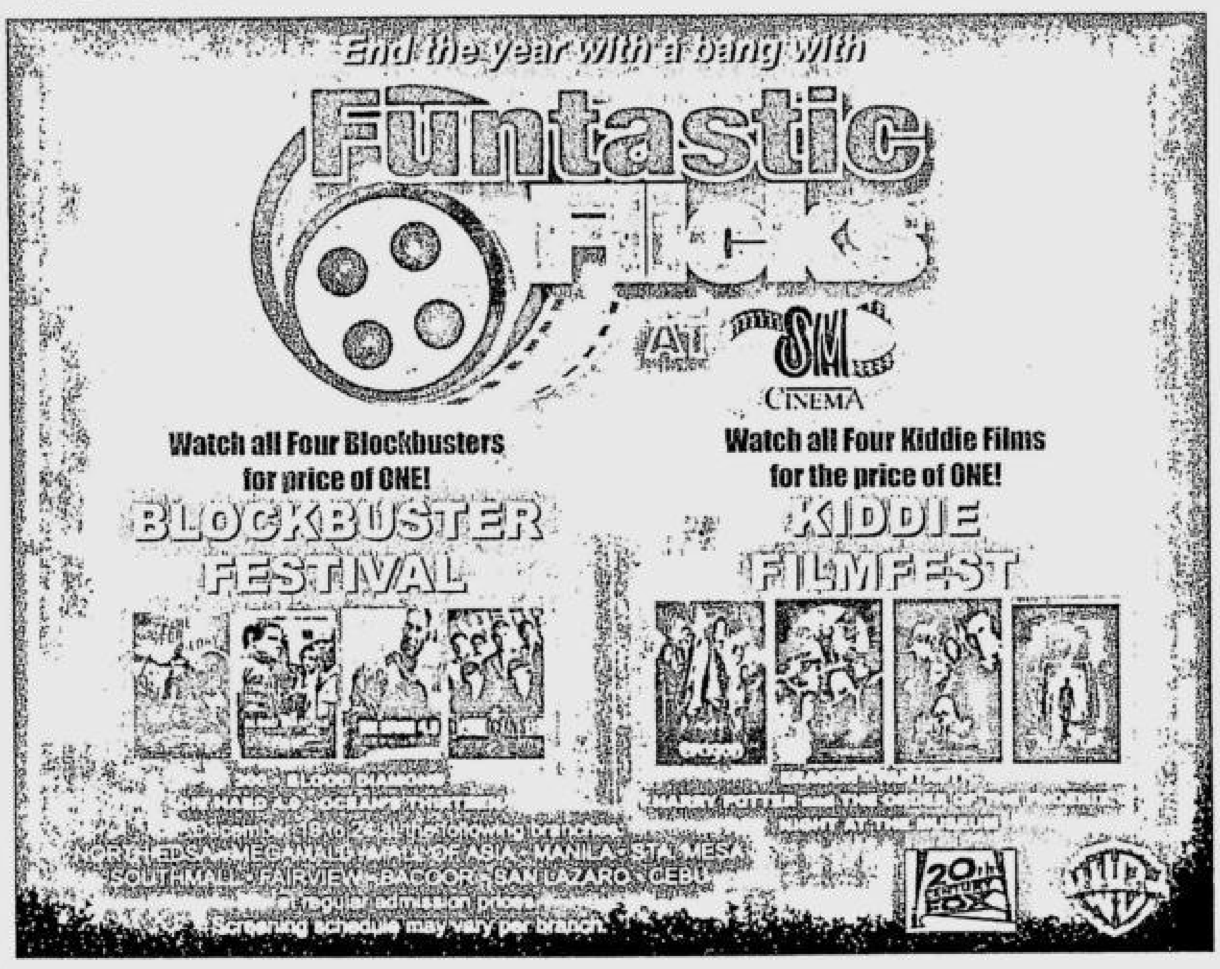
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2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 PASUKOB
4 HOOD OF HORROR

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04

1 BATANES
2 THE GAME PLAN
3 PASUKOB
4 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

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2 HITMAN
3 ELIZABETH

SM CITY LIPA (043) 784-0187

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2 BALLS OF FURY
3 BATANES
4 FRED CLAUSE/ HITMAN

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85

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2 RENDITION
3 EL CANTANTE
4 THE KINGDOM
5 BATANES
6 CARTOON NETWORK/ PASUKOB

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5349811

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2 THE KINGDOM
3 HITMAN
4 GOLDEN COMPASS

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80

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2 FRED CLAUSE/ BOOGEYMAN 2
3 THE KINGDOM
4 BATANES

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39

1 BATANES
2 FRED CLAUSE
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4 KUNG FU FIGHTER

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45

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SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422

1 30 DAYS OF NIGHT
2 RESERVED
3 HITMAN
4 GOLDEN COMPASS
5 RESERVED
6 EASTERN PROMISES
7 THE GAMEPLAN
8 ENCHANTED

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876

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2 KIDDIE FILMFEST
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4 THE GAMEPLAN
5 CATACOMBS
6 ENCHANTED
7 CARTOON NETWORK/ UNREST
8 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

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2 HITMAN
3 FRED CLAUSE
4 GOLDEN COMPASS

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Romantic drama highlights equipoise between man and nature

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

DIRECTOR **ADOLF ALIX** MUST LOVE Batanes a lot that in the span of only one year, he's shot two movies there: "Kadin" for the Cinemalaya alternative film festival and the current screener, "Batanes," co-directed by **David Hukom.**

As in the earlier movie, "Batanes" showcases the beauty and power of the country's northernmost group of islands, especially its imposing mountains, pristine coastal vistas, blue-green waters, and waves breaking dramatically on jagged reefs near the shore.

The dramatic impression is one of raw, primitive emotions of nature being a constant pressure and influence in people's lives, of existence being pared by elemental forces, down to its most basic essence.

Thus, in the film's story, city girl **Iza Calzado** happily leaves the stresses of urban dwelling behind to start life anew with her young husband in Batanes, where he was born and where his parents still live.

The sea as rival

Iza adores her husband (**Joem Basco**) and his beautiful birthplace. After a while, however, she senses that she's been drawn into a subtle form of rivalry for her young spouse's virile attention. Her rival? The sea surrounding Batanes itself!

In her husband's view, the sea is a beautiful, powerful and jealous entity, one that gifts him with all the fish he needs—but also insists on his devotion to "her." This elemental entity can be fickle and even violent—and, tragically so, when one seemingly ordinary day, it becomes stormy, and claims the young fisherman's life.

His bereaved parents (**Bembol Roco** and **Daria Ramirez**) accept his death as a part of their elemental life on their island, but Iza can't. She grieves for months, and hates the sea for being so fickle and vicious.

Until it shows her another aspect of its power by pulling in the unconscious form of a young Taiwanese (**Ken Chu**). Despite her sadness, she instinctively takes care of the castaway, until he recovers.

They find themselves attracted to each other, and in time, he replaces her deceased husband in her heart. Thus does the sea shows that, while it can take love away, it can also give it back.

This is a quietly captivating and affirming tale, and its thematic points are vivified by Calzado's sometimes quietly luminous performance.

Alas, her Taiwanese co-star's performance suffers in comparison. Part of the problem isn't his fault: The production handles the Filipino-Taiwanese "language translation" problem in stodgy and unenlightened fashion.

Also disappointing is the movie's less than inspired rendering of the man-nature equipoise that is at the heart of its story.

While the film's visuals are lovely, they do not sufficiently dramatize the visceral and mystifying aspects of that elemental relationship. The viewer understands the thematic thrust of the storytelling, but his heart is left relatively cold.

But we're glad we saw "Batanes," because it's a welcome respite from the loud and lurid productions that most other filmmakers churn out these days.

We're also glad that the film has cast Roco and Ramirez in important roles. They're among our best thespians, so it's great finally to see them being given their due on the big screen.

OPENING TODAY

Martian Child

Stars John Cusack, Bobby Coleman, Joan Cusack, Amanda Peet, Anjelica Huston, Oliver Platt

Directed by Menno Meyjes

Based on David Gerrold's "loosely autobiographical" story, this drama-comedy recounts the travails of a sci-fi author (Cusack) who happens to be the adoptive dad of an introverted, kooky kid (Coleman) who insists he's from Mars. J.R. Jones of Chicago Reader comments that "Cusack carries this unabashed tearjerker." Kyle Smith of New York Post raves that it "has enough wit and unpredictability to hold your attention ... a diverting visit to Planet Cute." Jason Ferguson points out that the director "pulls an engaging film out of the potential claptrap."

S'porean is first…

From page G1

Mirza was often in the bottom two, along with India's Abhijeet Sawant.

So why did Mirza win?

One explanation is offered by Perci Intalan, head of Creative and Entertainment Production of ABC 5, which aired the contest locally: "Hady must've gotten more of that crucial second vote outside his home country."

As a rule, text senders were asked to choose two contestants, to level the playing field and prevent hometown votes from influencing the outcome.

Terra Daffon, ABC 5 senior vice president for Corporate Affairs, agreed: "Perhaps that was what happened. Voters paired strong candidates with weak ones like Singapore and India who were trailing in the online survey."

Daffon further speculated: "It's possible that the voting glitches we experienced here (Manila) happened everywhere except Singapore where the voting was processed."

Text votes in Manila were delayed by eight hours and the delays continued until Sunday—night of the results show.

Intalan explained that the glitch was caused by "a clog in the telephone companies."

On Saturday's show, Singaporean judge Ken Lim asserted that the first "Asian Idol" should possess "commercial appeal."

On Monday, Lim reiterated on Channel News Asia that "looks and voice" had won the title for Mirza.

As for Marcelo?

She seems unruffled.

She was more thrilled about working with "American Idol" champ Taylor Hicks, a guest on finals night. "He's a Richard Gomez lookalike!"

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 ENCHANTED MTRCB: GP
2 GOLDEN COMPASS MTRCB: PG-13
3 KINGDOM MTRCB: R-13
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PREMIERE THEATRE ELIZABETH MTRCB PG-13

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BATANES 2:30 | 7:10	ONE MORE CHANCE 12:45 | 3:40 6:35 | 9:30	THE KINGDOM 4:20 | 9:20	PASUKOB 3:00 | 7:20	ENCHANTED 1:45 | 4:20 6:55 | 9:30

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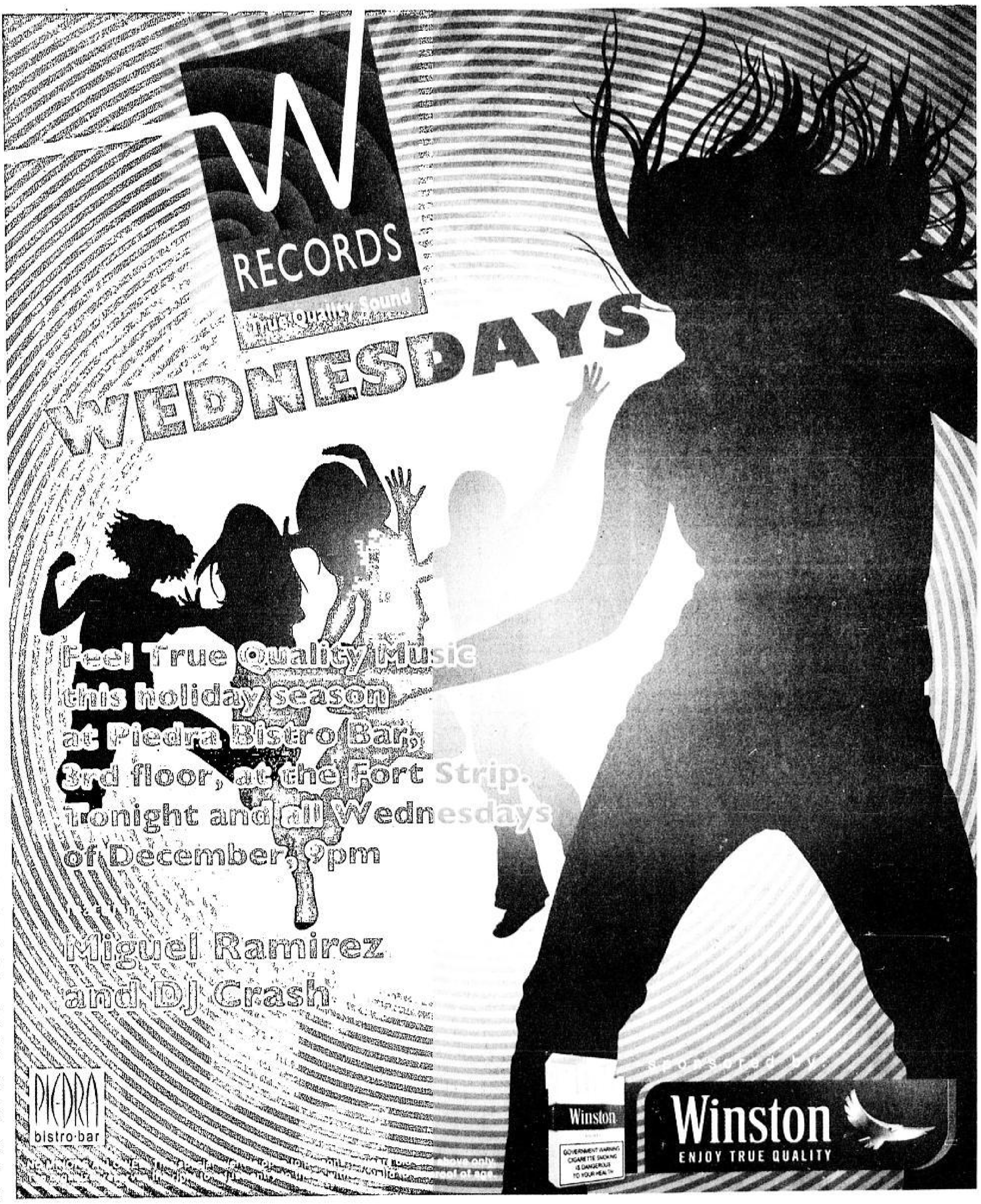

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Kapamilya kiddie show wears Anak TV Seal

KID FIT

"SIRIT," A WEEKLY INTERACTIVE TV show in Filipino, was recently awarded the ANAK TV Seal for child- and family-friendly shows.

The awardees were chosen by 1,972 jurors from various sectors nationwide during 35 screenings held from March to November. Additional jury screening was done collegially by the National Council for Children's Television, Movies and Television Review and Classification Board, Bureau of Broadcasts, Philippine Information Agency and Department of Education.

"Sirit," a combination of puppetry, live action, graphics and simple animation, chronicles the adventures of two male and female hand puppets, Bo (Jacqueline Anne de los Reyes) and Bi (Priscila Rose Nalundasan), as they seek answers, find new worlds, unlock mysteries and discover themselves and their abilities. In the process, they show that learning is fun and demonstrate how to cope with the challenges that arise in their daily lives.

A female adult, Ate (Ma. Criselda Consunji), accompanies Bo and Bi on their adventure. As their life coach, Ate provides discipline, guidance, stability and the knowledge needed by them in their daily learning adventure.

Main audience

The content of "Sirit" is based on the Early Childhood Care and Development curriculum of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

This set of teaching goals was specifically developed for preschool children aged 3-6 years old.

"Sirit" airs on ABS-CBN Channel 2 every Saturday at 7:50-8:15 a.m. It is also seen worldwide through The Filipino Channel.

The ANAK TV Seal is issued yearly by the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children and Television led by its president, Edgardo Roces, and secretary general, Mag Cruz Hatol.

The latest awarding was held at the Soka Gakai Auditorium in Quezon City on Dec. 11.

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	2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	
	3	BATANES	
	4	HITMAN	
GLORIETTA 4	1	ENCHANTED	
	2	THE KINGDOM	
	3 THX	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	DEATH PROOF	
	5	GONE BABY GONE	
	6	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	
	7	MARTIAN CHILD	
GREENBELT 1	1	MARTIAN CHILD	
	2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	
GREENBELT 3	1 THX	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	GUARANTEED SEATS
	2 THX	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	GUARANTEED SEATS
	3	MARTIAN CHILD	GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	GONE BABY GONE	GUARANTEED SEATS
	5	ENCHANTED	GUARANTEED SEATS
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	
	2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	
	3	MARTIAN CHILD	
	4	GONE BABY GONE	
	5	ENCHANTED	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	
	2	THE GAME PLAN	
	3	FRED CLAUS	
	4	LUST CAUTION	
MARKET! MARKET!	1	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	
	2	ENCHANTED	
	3	MARTIAN CHILD	
	4	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	
	5	THE KINGDOM	
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	3	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	MARTIAN CHILD	GUARANTEED SEATS
	5	ENCHANTED	
	6	FRED CLAUS	
	7 THX	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	GUARANTEED SEATS

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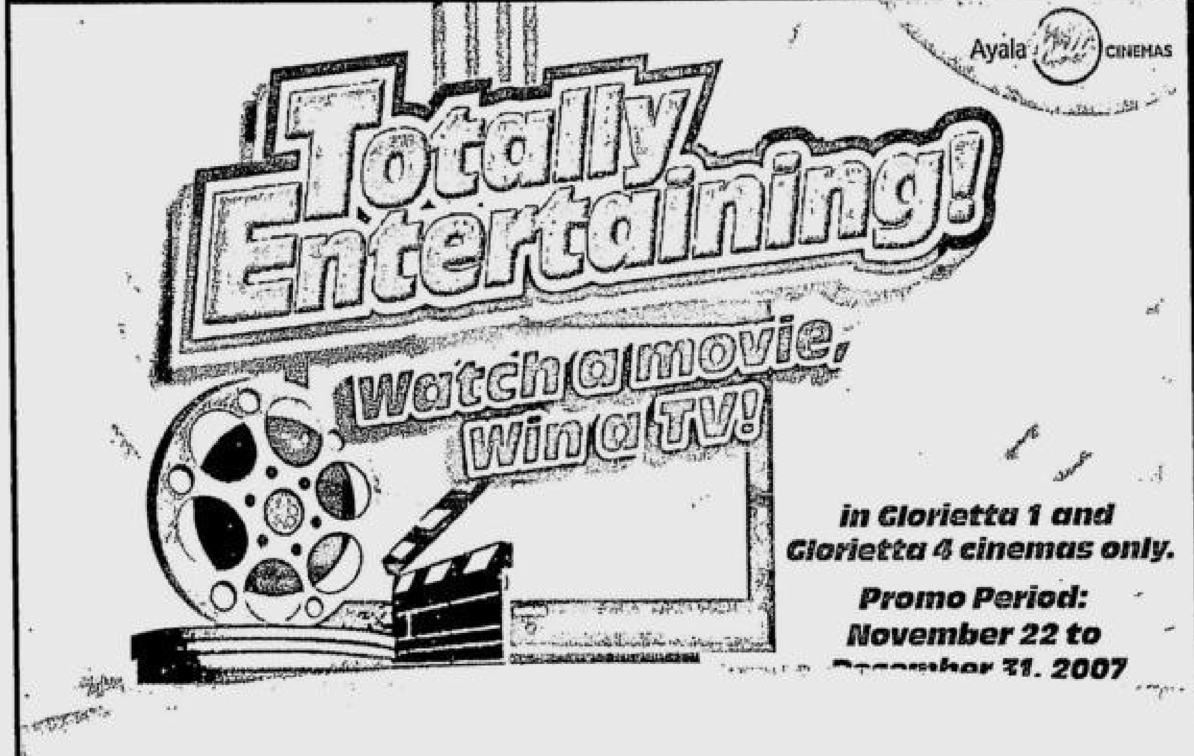
Market! Market! - 886 7519
TriNoma - 901 3000

glorietta	Taylor Hicks Live! December 18; 7pm; Glorietta 4 Park
GREENBELT	Taylor Hicks Live! December 19; 7pm; Greenbelt 3 Park
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	Christian Bautista Live! December 22; 6pm; Town Plaza
AYALA CENTER CEBU	Christmas Chorale featuring Akafellas December 22; 7pm; Activity Center
MARKET! MARKET!	Japan Foundation Karate Demonstration December 18; 6pm; Activity Center
Greenbelt Onstage	Repertory Philippines presents TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE January 11 to 27, 2007 For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710 or visit www.repertory-philippines.com
Ayala MUSEUM	WATER: THE MEDIUM by Juvenal Sanso November 24 to January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery For more info, pls. call 757-7117 to 21 loc. 14 or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org
TriNoma	Taylor Hicks Live! December 20; 7pm; Activity Center FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P500 worth of purchase. See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-938, Series of 2007 December 1 to 31



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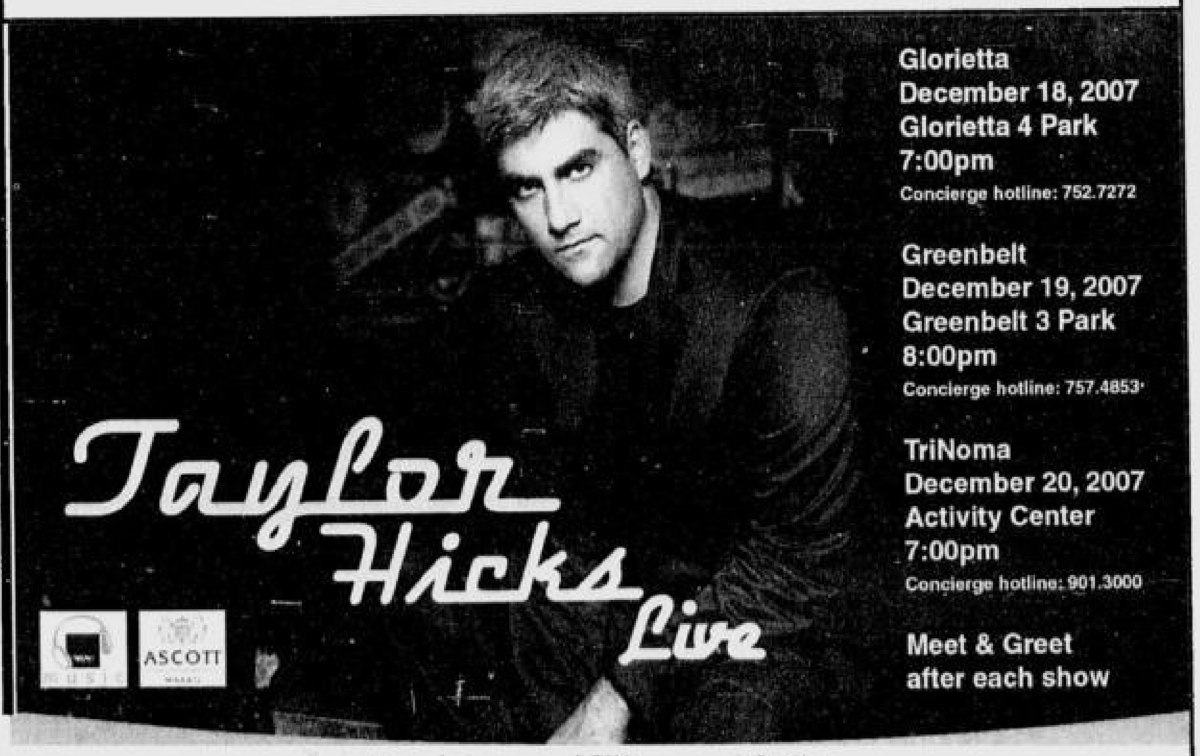

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Greenbelt
December 19, 2007
Greenbelt 3 Park
8:00pm
Concierge hotline: 757.4853
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5	6	No Country for Old Men	$3.00 mln	6
6	✪	The Perfect Holiday	$2.97 mln	1
7	4	Fred Claus	$2.34 mln	3
8	3	This Christmas	$2.30 mln	4
9	16	Atonement	$1.85 mln	2
10	7	August Rush	$1.79 mln	4

This Week, Last Week — Weeks in Release

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DID YOU KNOW...

Celine Dion bids Caesars adieu

LAS VEGAS—Celine Dion called it a wrap at Caesars Palace, acknowledging in her final show that pregnancy and poor early reviews almost sank her titanic five-year engagement.

As adoring fans cheered through Saturday night's performance, Dion interspersed her usual numbers with emotion-filled monologues: "At one point, it was like feeling like the Titanic was about to sink again," she said. "But we believed and we went on with it."

Taking Dion's place starting Feb. 20 is Bette Midler. *AP*

MOZZIE vocalist Pam Pastor and guitarist Francis Gaerlan PHOTO BY ROLLIE VALENZUELA

Mozzie goes schizo-phonic

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

CURFEW HAD BEEN announced, but the band Mozzie (*mot-zee*) pushed through with a special show on Nov. 29 at the Xaymaca bar in Timog.

It was a well-attended EP (extended play, with seven tracks—fewer than a full-length album) launch party, but the set was cut short so guests could go home early.

The gig was over by 11 p.m., though the band members stayed a bit to sign copies of their "Dried to Pseudo-Perfection" CDs for fans and friends.

Mozzie is made up of INQUIRER youth section editor-writer Pam Pastor (vocals), her cousins Chrissie (guitars) and Fi Capicoy (bass), and their friend Francis Gaerlan (guitars). Powie Pastor, Pam's brother, and Che Santos alternate on drums. Mozzie's regular repertoire includes sensitive, angry-woman rock, as well as genderless, universal ponderings. They do spirited covers of songs by Rachael Yamagata and Alanis Morissette during regular gigs.

How does it feel to have your parents around during gigs?

Pam: It's awesome to have a mom who understands my passion for music. She gets my humor; she doesn't cringe when I curse.

Chrissie: Our dad is usually the one who's around. He bought our musical instruments. The number one criticism I get from him is, "Why won't you face the audience?"

You all have day jobs. How demanding has performing been?

Fi: It's very hard to balance jobs and gigs. Plus we have to squeeze in band practices, recording and writing.

Pam: Things get crazy sometimes. We [sometimes] practice in the middle of the night. We don't complain because the truth is, we need this. The gigs are like therapy for us, a chance to take a break and have a blast!

Francis: We'd rather do this than rest at home after work.

What should people know about the eventual release of your full-length album?

Pam: It will be out early next year [and] we have more than enough to fill an album.

Fi: It's going to be a 15-track album with more schizo pop goodness.

What is "schizo pop"?

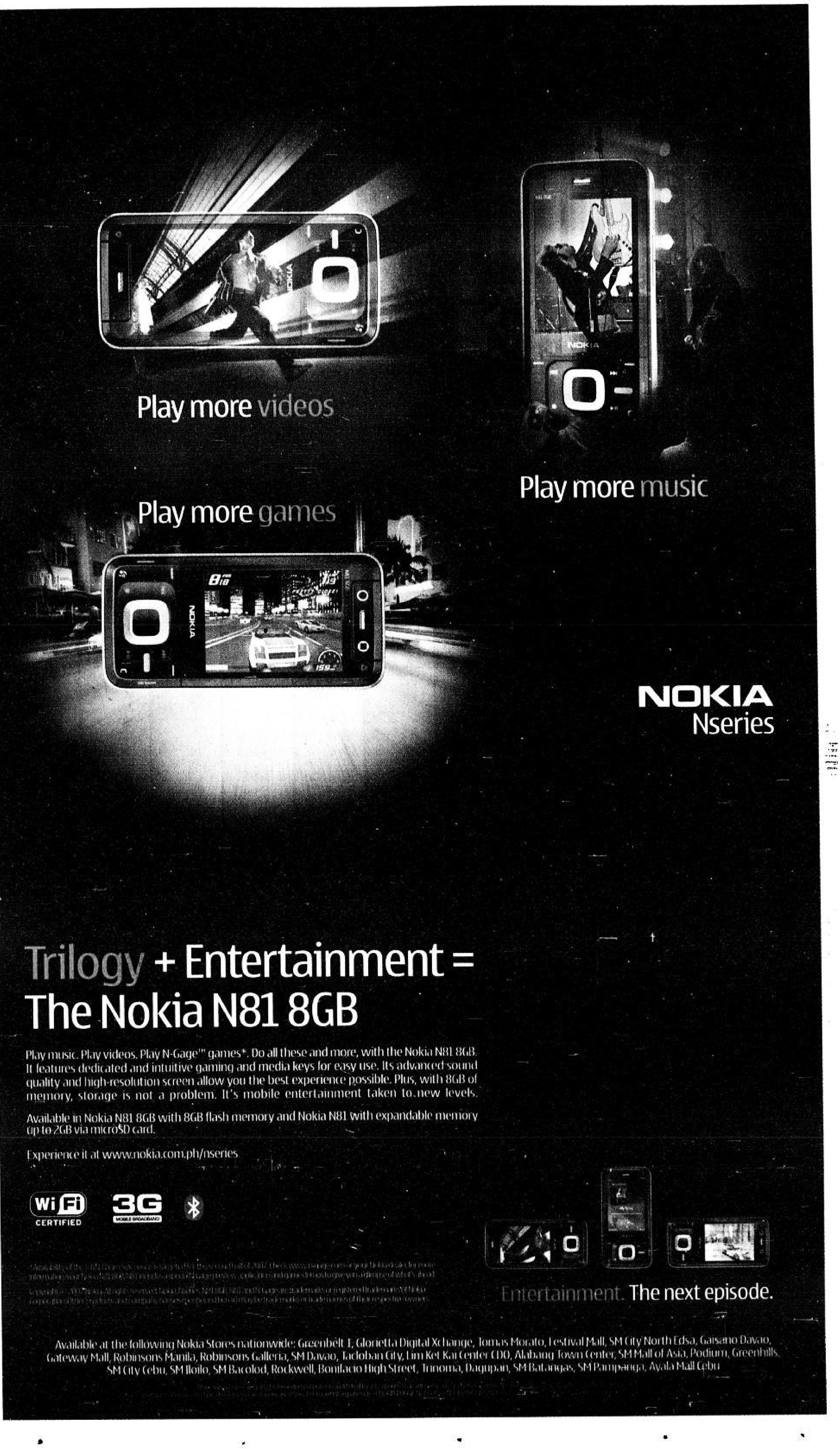
Fi: It's basically pop music with elements from other genres.

Pam: We came up with [the term] "schizo pop" because we got tired of stuttering when people asked about our kind of music. "Schizo" describes a band that can't decide if it's happy or angry, hopeful or cynical. It reflects who we are—constantly changing and searching for identity. And we'll entertain you while we do it.

How "indie" is the EP?

Francis: We did everything ourselves—including folding and inserting the CD sleeves.

Pam: We're as indie as indie can be. We raided our bank accounts. It's been crazy, but... people telling us they've been playing it all day, or they're in love with our songs, that's all we need to keep going.



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‘Pinoy Classic Rockers’ sets free concerts in La Union

SHOW TIME

THE WEB-BASED ORGANIZATION PINOY Classic Rockers (PCR) celebrates its sixth anniversary with a free two-day concert on Jan. 25-26 at the San Juan Surf Camp in San Juan, La Union.

Some 20 bands—among them Hotdog, Bits and Pieces, Chosen Few, Deltas, Electromaniacs, KSL, Moonstrucks, Sundowners, Where’s Charlie, St. Charles Band, Holy Band, Halo-Halo, Joey “Pepe” Smith and Friends—are slated to perform.

PCR was formed on the Internet (PinoyClassicRock.com) in January 2002 for Pinoy band members from the 1950s to the ’70s now living in different parts of the world to catch up with each other and hold reunions to play the music of their respective eras. Call/text 0920-890-8287 or e-mail info@pinoyclassicrock.com.

Gary V at Eastwood

Eastwood City presents Gary Valenciano in concert, Dec. 21; Kuh Ledesma, Dec. 22; Side A, Dec. 28; and Regine Velasquez, Dec. 29.

All shows start at 8 p.m. at the Eastwood Central Plaza, Libis, Quezon City. Call 687-6770 to 74 or (0917) 839-2489.

TAYLOR Hicks

‘ASAPooh ’08’

“ASAPooh ’08” features comedian Pooh on Dec. 28, 8:30 p.m. at the Music Museum.

Joining him onstage are Rufa Mae Quinto, Maja Salvador, Candy Pangilinan ang Vhong Navarro. Call Backroom at 435-1120 or e-mail backroomtalents@pldtdsl.net.

Tonight

Ivy Maniquiz, 8 p.m., Fiesta San Miguel, Dusit Hotel, Makati. Call 867-3333.

Taylor Hicks, 8 p.m., Greenbelt 3 Park, Makati.

Dec. 20

Taylor Hicks, 7 p.m., TriNoma Activity Center, Quezon City.

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3 (DOLBY) THE GOLDENT COMPASS
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334228
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 GREEN PARADISE
5 HOOD OF HORROR

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1
2
3
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 ENCHANTED
2 BATANES
3 THE GOLDENT COMPASS

Center Mall Cinema
Bagulo Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 HITMAN
2 THE GOLDENT COMPASS

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1
2
3
4

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 ENCHANTED
2 THE GOLDENT COMPASS

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 ENCHANTED
2 THE GOLDENT COMPASS
3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
4 THE KINGDOM

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 THE GOLDENT COMPASS
2 GAME PLAN
3 THE KINGDOM
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 HITMAN
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 GAME PLAN

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 HITMAN / FRED CLAUS
2 GREEN PARADISE
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
4 HITMAN

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 FREAD CLAUS / HITMAN
3 THE KINGDOM

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 ENCHANTED

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 BATANES
2 ONE MORE CHANCE

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 PLEASE CALL
2
3
4

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 THE KINGDOM
2 PLEASE CALL
3 PLEASE CALL
4 BATANES
5 GAME PLAN

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 BALLS OF FURY
2 BEOWULF
3 RENDITION
4 PLEASE CALL

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 PLEASE CALL
2

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
PROMENADE GREENHILLS
...a dinetertainment for all!
NOW SHOWING
CINEMA 3 MARTIAN CHILD 11:00, 1:20, 3:40 6:00, 8:20, 10:35 GP
CINEMA 4 ELIZABETH 11:40, 2:25, 5:10 7:55, 10:35 PG-13
CINEMA 5 THE GOLDEN COMPASS 11:00, 1:15, 3:30 5:45, 8:00, 10:15 PG - 13
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

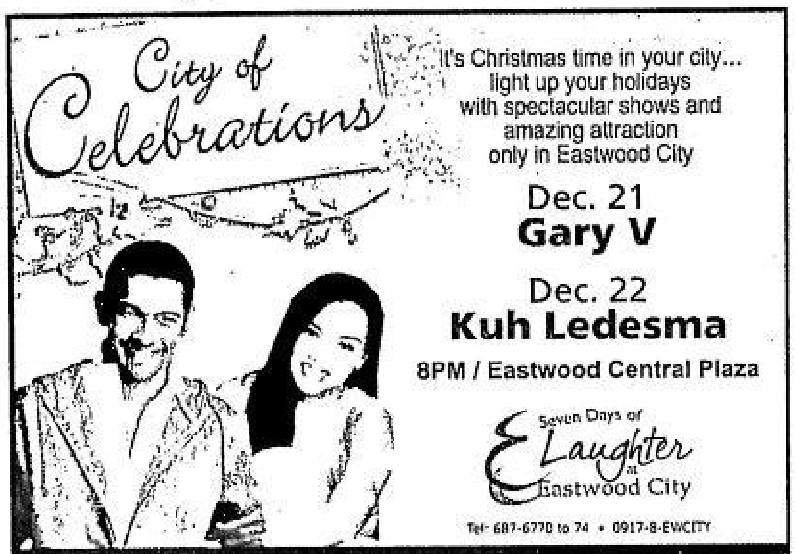
MUSIC MUSEUM

December 19, 2007	Pilita Corales, Dulce, Malu Barry	8:30 PM
December 28, 2007	Pooh	8:00 PM
January 24, 2008	Dancing with the Champions 2	8:00 PM
Feb. 8-9, 15-16, 2008	Sitti, Rey Valera	8:00 PM

TEATRINO PROMENADE GREENHILLS

December 20, 2007	Jed Madela	8:00 PM
December 28 & 29, 2007	Drag - Ons	10:00 PM

FOR INQUIRIES PLS. CALL 722-4532 LOC 116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1 ENCHANTED 2:35, 5:15, 7:55, 10:35 G
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS 2:40, 5:20, 8:00, 10:35 PG-13
3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE 2:40, 5:20, 8:00, 10:30 PG-13
4 THE KINGDOM 2:35, 5:15, 7:55, 10:35 R-13

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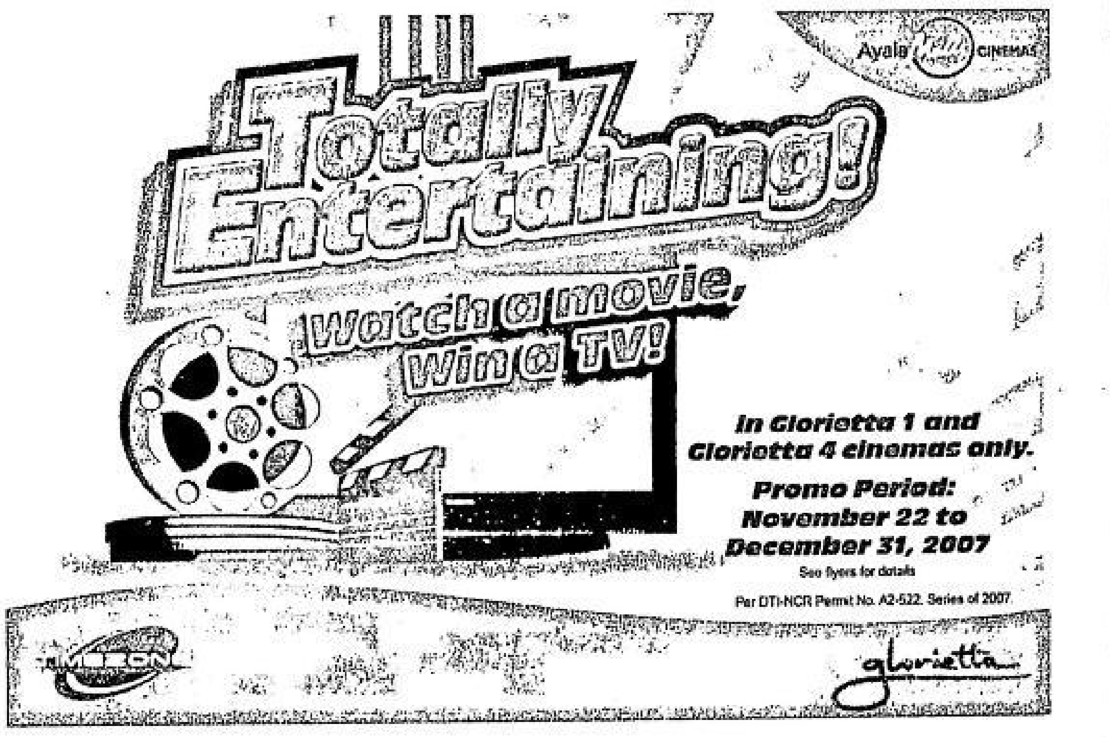
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Based on the Hugo Award & Nebula Award-winning short story by renowned sci-fi luminary David Gerrold.
john cusack
amanda peet
and
bobby coleman

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OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2007
JINGGOY ESTRADA and LORNA TOLENTINO
BAYANI AGBAYANI EUGENE DOMINGO ARRON VILLAFLOR introducing JULIAN ESTRADA
SHAINA MAGDAYAO RAYVER CRUZ
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A
MABUHAY ANG OFW!
KATAS NG SAUDI
umuwi na si Daddy!
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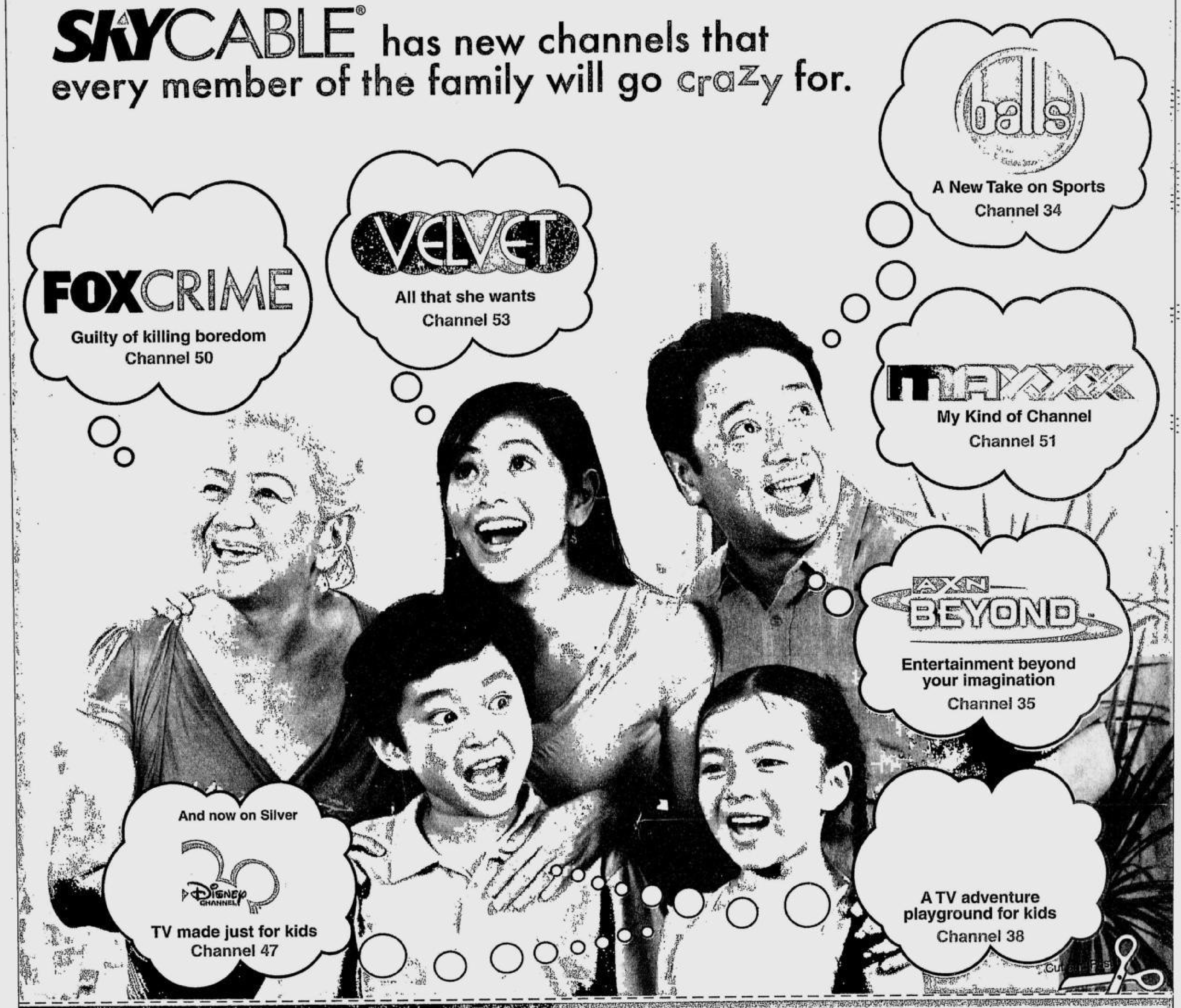
balls
A New Take on Sports
Channel 34
FOXCRIME
Guilty of killing boredom
Channel 50
VELVET
All that she wants
Channel 53
MAXXX
My Kind of Channel
Channel 51
AXN BEYOND
Entertainment beyond your imagination
Channel 35
And now on Silver
Disney Channel
TV made just for kids
Channel 47
A TV adventure playground for kids
Channel 38

SkyCable's all new line-up starting January 1, 2008.

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5	ZOE 33	33	MYSKY	58	DA-AI
6	NBN 4	NEW! 34	BALLS	59	TCT NETWORK
8	ABS-CBN	NEW! 35	AXN BEYOND	60	EWTN
10	ABC 5	36	CINEMAX	62	CEC
11	**SKYSKED**	37	HALLMARK	63	GXTV
12	GMA 7	NEW! 38	KIDSCO	64	POWER TV
14	CRIME/SUSPENSE	39	DISCOVERY	65	ASIA PLUS
15	IBC 13	40	ANIMAL PLANET	66	STAR CHINESE MOVIES
16	ETC	41	NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC	67	CUBE TV
17	STUDIO 23	42	KNOWLEDGE	68	STAR NEWS
18	NET 25	43	CARTOON NETWORK	69	STAR ONE
19	2ND AVENUE	44	HERO TV	70	STAR GOLD
20	GEM TV	45	NICKELODEON	71	C-SPAN WORLDNET
21	UNTV	46	ANIMAX	72	DEUTSCHE WELLE
22	INC	47	DISNEY	73	TV ESPAÑOL
23	MYX	48	STAR WORLD	74	TV5 FRANCE
24	QTV	49	AXN	75	KBS
25	PLATINUM REVIEW	NEW! 50	FOXCRIME	76	MAKISIG NETWORK
26	TELERADYO	NEW! 51	MAXXX	77	SAUDI 1
27	ANC	52	LIFESTYLE NETWORK	78	NHK
28	CNN	NEW! 53	VELVET	79	CHANNEL NEWS ASIA
29	BBC WORLD	54	HBO	82	MAKISIG NETWORK
30	BLOOMBERG	55	STAR MOVIES	95	ACQ-KBN 39
31	ESPN	56	CINEMA ONE	96	3 ABN 45
32	STAR SPORTS	57	MTV	99	LIVING ASIA

SKYCABLE PLATINUM

100	HBO HITS
101	HBO SIGNATURE
102	HBO FAMILY
105	TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES
106	MGM
110	CNN HEADLINE NEWS
111	CNBC
112	FOX NEWS
113	PAY PER VIEW
120	DISCOVERY TRAVEL & LIVING
121	DISCOVERY HOME & HEALTH
122	DISCOVERY REAL TIME
123	DISCOVERY SCIENCE
124	NAT GEO ADVENTURE
125	BOOMERANG
126	PLAYHOUSE DISNEY
130	AUSTRALIA NETWORK
131	WINE TV
132	FASHION TV
135	CHANNEL [V]
136	PAY-PER-VIEW
140	FAMILYLAND
141	CTS
145	CCTV-9
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'Desperadas, Operadas,' plus 'Katas ng Kapuso'

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

HAVEN'T WE HEARD ENOUGH of the Metro Manila Film Fest entries? So I thought of giving the movies a different spin, all in the spirit of Yuletide fun …

"Desperadas": "Operadas" starring **Belo's** proud celebrity endorsers.

"Bahay Kubo": "Pinoy Big Brother" with a twist. The "Kubo" is carried *bayanihan*-style to a new location, leaving the evicted housemate behind.

"Katas ng Saudi": "Katas ng Kapuso" featuring **Angel Locsin.** It will trace her phenomenal rise as GMA 7's prized ward and her much-ballyhooed transfer to the Kapamilya network.

"Enteng Kabisote 4: Okay Ka Fairy Ko (The Beginning of a Legend)": "Edu Kap Force: OA Ka Pare Ko (The Beginning of a Collision)" starring **Edu Manzano, Bong Revilla** and Optical Media Board members. It will shed light on what goes on before, after and during their raids of pirated discs stalls.

"Shake Rattle & Roll": "Shake, Rattle & Crawl" with **Carlene Aguilar** and **Dennis Trillo** fighting for custody of their love child **Calix.** Special participation of **Cristine Reyes** as the reluctant stepmom.

"Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo": "Sakdal, Sa Kalye, Magdalo" will be **Sen. Antonio Trillanes'** launching movie with an array of "trying hard" aging action stars as rebel soldiers.

"Anak ng Kumander": Starring **Kris Aquino, Josh** and baby **James.** In true Kristeta fashion, the story will center on her and what's hers.

"Banal": A peek into the life of **Piolo Pascual,** if he pursues his dream of being a pastor. **Lolit Solis** in a cameo role reciting her litany of sponsors and mouthing her "act of contrition."

Acts of kindness

There are some people who provide shelter from the storm with their random acts of kindness. The Christmas spirit lives on through them all year round. Here are anecdotes about some celebs who are living proof of that based on what I've seen and stories of insiders.

Cesar Montano: When Buboy was invited to perform in Japan, he agreed to a smaller talent fee so he could bring along **Bayani Agbayani,** still a struggling comedian at the time. He told the producer that Bayani deserved the break.

Angel Locsin: I found it so sweet of Angel to bring **Valerie Concepcion** to her car across a busy street. Angel didn't mind crossing the road back to her van, alone, even if motorists kept honking their horn when they saw her passing.

Diether Ocampo: When Diether Ocampo interviewed skateboarding legend **Tony Hawk,** he asked for his autograph to give to some kids who are Tony's big fans.

Ogie Alcasid: He gamely held an impromptu mini-concert at a friend's birthday party *gratis et amore.*

Dr. Vicki Belo: She takes time out to treat her staff to a movie or a concert. It makes them feel that, after clinic hours, they are just like *barkada.*

Dingdong Dantes: At the height of a controversy, he called up an embattled colleague even if they were not that close. He just wanted to express his support.

Philip Salvador: He offered to be the peacemaker between two warring celebrities.

Dina Bonnevie: She had no qualms about surprising a couple on their anniversary. The girl requested Dina to pop up at a resto while they were having dinner because her BF had a big crush on her. Not only did she show up, Dina even surprised the couple by picking up the tab.

'Enteng' series

For three years in a row, OctoArts Films and M-Zet TV Productions consistently scored at the tills in the MMFF via their "Enteng Kabisote" series.

It is being touted that, this year, "Enteng Kabisote 4: Okay Ka Fairy Ko (The Beginning of A Legend)" will surpass the record set by its predecessors. It will trace Faye's (**Kristine Hermosa**) origin as a fairy before she fell for Enteng (**Vic Sotto**), a mortal.

Tintin and Bossing's chemistry on-screen is undeniable. Will this translate to a smooth father-daughter-in-law relationship, if Tintin's blooming romance with Oyo Sotto gets serious?

Christmas show

Catch **Jed Madela** in "Christmas with the Voice" at the Teatrino Greenhills on Dec. 20 with special guest **Gayle Blanco.** For tickets, call (0917) 899-3154. Time for some ChristMUSH via Jed's classic renditions.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

THE ACTOR'S sister, actress and ABS-CBN executive Beverly Vergel, says Ace's son Ali is devastated.

MOVIE director Willy Milan, right, here with Ace's younger brother Mike, says the actor came to his aid when he had big financial problems.

Ace Vergel kept ailment a secret

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Niño Jesus Orbeta

ACTOR ACE VERGEL, WHO DIED FOLLOWING a cardiac arrest on Saturday morning, had needed a heart transplant, his sister Beverly told INQUIRER Entertainment.

But nobody knew except the actor's son Ali, said Beverly, who is also an actress and an ABS-CBN executive.

"I guess he didn't want us to worry," Beverly said in an interview at her brother's wake on Sunday night. "We just knew that was confined in the hospital a few times."

Ace's remains lie at the Superior Chapel of La Funeraria Paz on Araneta Avenue in Quezon City. Cremation is scheduled on Friday at 2 p.m.

Ali arrived on Sunday from the United States, where he lives. Beverly said the actor's son was "still in shock."

"When Ali saw his dad's coffin for the first time, he became so weak in the knees that we had to help him to a chair," recalled Beverly, who herself sounded distraught during the interview.

Last birthday

Younger brother Mike said he noticed that the actor's health had deteriorated only on Nov. 20, during Ace's birthday celebration.

Mike recalled, "He had in his hands some 10 tablets that he said he had to take all at the same time. I also noticed that he had lost a lot of weight."

At the same gathering, Mike had told the actor about movie director Willy Milan's plan to include him in the cast of a new film. "He said yes immediately," Mike recalled.

Acting award

Milan gave Ace his first Best Actor Award from the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino. It was for the lead role in "Anak ng Cabron," in 1988.

The director said Ace was like a brother to him. "He helped me, like he helped a lot of people. There was a time when I was so down, financially, that I couldn't even pay for my daughter's tuition. He offered to pay for it," Milan recounted.

Fight instructor Rudy Ramirez, who worked with Ace in "Carta Alas" and six other action movies, said he, too, had experienced the actor's generosity. For one, he said, Ace had given him a brand new cell phone.

Ramirez added, "He also made sure that the production teams in all his movies were never hungry. He always brought food to the set. And I just recently found out that, everyday for several years, Ace's house help had cooked 10 kilos of rice to feed street kids who knocked on his door."

Dodong Albano, a member of the Philippine Stuntman Association, has been a fan of Ace's since they worked together on on the set of "Pieta." Said Albano, "He cared about the little people. He treated us like his equals. Every year, during Christmas, he gave us cash gifts and bags of groceries."

Talent manager and film producer Dondon Monteverde, who handled the actor's show biz career in the early '90s, remembers Ace as "one of local film industry's most talented actors." Monteverde met Ace when the former was commissioned to make three films for Regal Entertainment—"Sige Subukan Mo" opposite Maricel Soriano, "Seth Corteza" with Joanne Quintas and "Edgardo Martial: Jacob" with Ara Mina.

Veteran stuntman Danny Real, who first worked with Ace in "Alabastro Brothers," believes that the entertainment industry has suffered a great loss with Ace's passing. "Just like FPJ (Fernando Poe Jr.) many depended on Ace," he explained. "He had a kind heart. He helped us find jobs even though he himself had stopped making movies."

Just a softie

Milan added: "Ace might have been called 'The Original Bad Boy of Philippine Movies,' but in real life he was actually a softie."

Vergel was a popular actor in the 1980s. He appeared in films like "Kamusta Ka Hudas?" with Rudy Fernandez, "Huwag Kang Papatay" opposite Rio Locsin, "Basag ang Pula" with Snooky Serna and "Sabi Mo Mahal Mo Ako Wala Nang Bawian" with Soriano.

SIGE SUBUKAN MO

ACE was known as the "bad boy" of Philippine cinema in the 1980s for always portraying toughie roles. These movie posters are displayed at his wake.

Stars volunteer for holiday stints in soup kitchens

By the INQUIRER and INQUIRER.NET Entertainment Staff

NEW YORK—ADRIAN GRENIER, who is usually busy either being a celebrity or playing one on TV, took a break to volunteer at a soup kitchen.

The native New Yorker returned home Friday with his mother and uncle to volunteer at Neighbors Together Soup Kitchen in Brooklyn.

"It's so important to give back … and I wanted to do my part by helping people here in Brooklyn," the actor said in a statement. "It isn't right that millions of families suffer from hunger and worry about getting their next meal. We all need to help in whatever way we can."

Grenier, who plays Vince Chase on the HBO hit series "Entourage," was taking part in an effort by America's Second Harvest and Netflix Inc. to draw attention to food bank shortages.

'Leader of the Band'

NEW YORK—Dan Fogelberg, the singer-songwriter whose hits "Leader of the Band" and "Longer" helped define the soft-rock era, died Sunday at his home in Maine after battling prostate cancer. He was 56.

His death was announced in a statement released by his family through the firm Scoop Marketing, which was also posted on the singer's website. *AP*

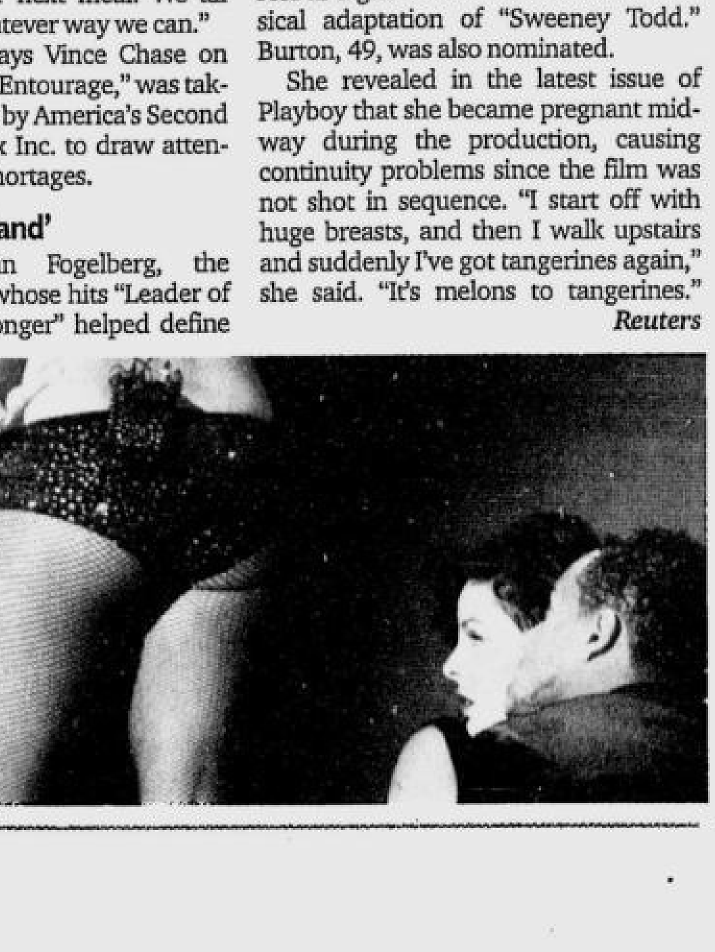
Melons to tangerines

LOS ANGELES—British actress Helena Bonham Carter has given birth to a daughter, her second child with director Tim Burton, People magazine reported on Sunday.

Bonham Carter, 41, received a Golden Globe nomination last week for her role as a ghoulish baker in Burton's musical adaptation of "Sweeney Todd." Burton, 49, was also nominated.

She revealed in the latest issue of Playboy that she became pregnant midway during the production, causing continuity problems since the film was not shot in sequence. "I start off with huge breasts, and then I walk upstairs and suddenly I've got tangerines again," she said. "It's melons to tangerines." *Reuters*

BRITNEY SPEARS at the MTV Video Awards in Vegas is the subject of this entry in Reuters News Pictures Service's Pictures of the Year.



Makeover for Pope

ROME—Franco Zeffirelli would like to make over what he called Pope Benedict XVI's "cold" image and his "showy" clothes, an Italian newspaper reported Saturday, saying the film, stage and opera director offered his services in an interview.

"If they give me a role [as image consultant], I would dedicate myself to it full time," Zeffirelli was quoted by Turin daily La Stampa as saying. *AP*

* * *

RUSHES

ADRIAN Grenier

Top of the talk shows

For those who missed last weekend's show biz gabfests on TV. (And why we are moved, if we are moved.)

- Manny Pacquiao commenting on reports that wife Jinkee angrily texted his "Anak ng Kumander" co-star Valerie Concepcion about their controversial kissing scene:

"Hindi ako maniwala na galing sa asawa ko 'yun. Hindi nakikialam 'yun eh. Medyo nasaktan din siya sa mga balita pero alam mo naman, ito movie *lang. Trabaho lang. Wala namang namagitan sa amin."* (You can stop this if you really want, Pacman.)

- Jackie Rice on persistent rumors she is pregnant with Biboy Ramirez's child:

"Marami mang naninira sa akin, sabi ng mommy *at* daddy *ko, maging* thankful *na lang daw ako dahil pinag-uusapan pa ako."* (They said *that*?)

- Jennylyn Mercado on her team-up with real-life boyfriend Patrick Garcia for the upcoming drama series "Maging Akin Ka Lamang":

"Natatakot ako kasi di ba sabi ko nga gusto kong maging private *'yung* relationship *namin."* (You can say no, actually.)

- Yasmien Kurdi on rumors she is not happy about her billing in the movie, "Bahay Kubo":

"Okey *lang.* Child star *naman si* Shaina. *Si* Marian *naman mas matanda sa akin, mga ganoon. Kaya walang problema sa akin."* (*Mmm, parang meron.*)

- Ruffa Gutierrez on having lawyers speak for her and estranged husband Yilmaz Bektas:

"Kapag nag-uusap kami minsan, masyado kaming nagiging emotional *kaya* complicated *ang* relationship *namin ngayon. Minsan,* sweet *kami.* There are times civil *kami.* There are times *nagsisigawan kami. Kasi nandyan pa yung mga* emotions *namin eh.* So it's better to have the lawyers talk *para* they can speak in a responsible way and a mature way *na walang kahalong* emotions." (Amen!)

- Alessandra de Rossi on a supposed rift with Rhian Ramos:

"Kahit sino'ng magmaldita sa akin … never *niyo ako nakitang magsalita kasi parang … kahit anong sabihin ko, parang ako lagi ang mali dahil maitim ako. Pag mestiza ka,* sweet *ka eh. Kahit anong gawin mo, mabait ka."* (*Ha?*)

- Aiko Melendez on making peace with estranged husband Martin Jickain:

"In all fairness to Martin, *nag-*greet *siya sa akin* today. *Siguro kaya sobra ang* aura *ko* today, I'm at peace. *Kasi* for such a long time … *pag nag-te-*text *siya sa akin, medyo masasakit 'yung mga ano …* and *'yung sagot ko rin sa kanya, masakit. Siguro* today*… nagpatawaran tayo. Kung hindi man tayo maging maayos* as *mag-asawa,* [we can] be the best parents for Marthena, and at least be friends." (*Bati na sila, kitam?*)

(Thanks to Startalk and The Buzz.)

The University of the Philippines on its 100th Year

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
1908 2008
CENTENNIAL

The Vision for UP:
Excellence, Service and Leadership in the Next 100 Years

The celebration's theme captures the University's vision for the future: Excellence is expressed as the discovery and development of new areas of knowledge; Service means going beyond conducting research to include designing effective action plans; and Leadership demands programs that will help transform the nation into an economic powerhouse.

This will guide the University's rationalization of program offerings, efforts to strengthen its position as a leading research university, firming up its science and technology programs, and developing a community of scholars with credentials comparable to those in the world's best universities.

JANUARY 8 GRAND LAUNCH ALL SET

UP's Centennial Year will be off to an energetic start as UP Diliman and the UP Alumni Association line up a full day of celebrations at the Diliman campus. Tau Alpha fraternity will sponsor a fun run in the morning, and at 2 p.m., a parade will wind its way around the campus, to Quezon Memorial Circle and back. Decorated Ikot jeeps, the UP Marching Band, the UP Pep Squad, varsity teams and the UP dance troupes will lead college and student org contingents in street dancing. Motorcades will start in the other UP campuses and converge in Diliman.

At 6 p.m., the UP Carillion bells will ring again for the first time since 1988. Then at 7 p.m., the UP Madrigal Singers and the UP Concert Chorus will perform free at the Amphitheater behind Quezon Hall. There will be food and drink booths, and special Centennial memorabilia will also be on sale.

A big fireworks display sponsored by Beta Epsilon fraternity will cap the evening.

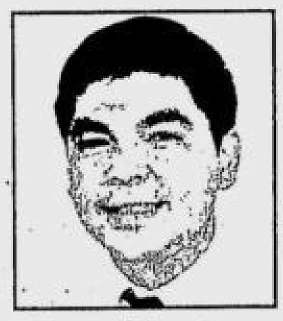
Centennial Commission Takes the Lead

By virtue of Executive Order No. 537, the UP Centennial Commission was formed to spearhead the task of raising P5 billion to build up the University Endowment Fund. This will fund faculty development programs, expansion of student services, modernization of campus facilities, and improvement of libraries and laboratories.

It is composed of distinguished and committed alumni from the UP community, government, private sector and from abroad.

Chairman
Senator Edgardo Angara

Vice Chairman
Dr. Magdaleno B. Albarracin


Exec. Director:
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Fundraising Goes Into Overdrive:
TARGET P5 BILLION

Upgrading of classrooms, laboratories and infrastructure. Faculty development, professorial chairs, fellowships, research and creative grants. It will take a lot to secure UP's place as the premier learning institution in the country. And the UP Centennial Commission has set an ambitious target of P5 Billion over 5 years. President Roman and her team have begun to tap alumni associations from all over the world. They're confident that the coming year's celebration will stimulate the funding that the University badly needs.

From Government

NEDA Secretary *Romulo Neri*
Nestor Espenilla, **Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor**

From the Private Sector

Dr. Gregorio Alvior
Ms. Robina Gokongwei-Pe
Atty. Gizela Gonzalez
Atty. Eduardo Hernandez
Mr. Menardo Jimenez
Mr. Jose "Pitoy" Moreno
Dr. Angelita T. Reyes

From Abroad

Mr. Theodore B. M. Aquino - **California**
Dr. Diosdado Banatao - **California**
Dr. Carmencita C. Quesada-Fulgado - **New York**
Dr. Bienvenido Jongco - **New Jersey**
Dr. Roberto Mariano - **Singapore**

President Roman Kicks Off Centennial Year Celebration

On June 18, 2007, University of the Philippines President Emerlinda Roman went to UP Manila to commemorate the start of the UP Centennial Year. Being the original site of the university, UP Manila was the perfect place to launch what promises to be a landmark year for the country's premier university.

The Centennial Year program will be a showcase of UP's past, present and future and is meant to demonstrate the importance of the academic institution not just to its present and former students, teachers and staff, but also to the rest of the country. According to President Roman, the university's role in national development will be at the heart of the celebration.

The University of the Philippines on its 100th Year

The Vision for UP: Excellence, Service and Leadership in the Next 100 Years

The celebration's theme captures the University's vision for the future: Excellence is expressed as the discovery and development of new areas of knowledge; Service means going beyond conducting research to include designing effective action plans; and Leadership demands programs that will help transform the nation into an economic powerhouse.

This will guide the University's rationalization of program offerings, efforts to strengthen its position as a leading research university, firming up its science and technology programs, and developing a community of scholars with credentials comparable to those in the world's best universities.

JANUARY 8 GRAND LAUNCH ALL SET

UP's Centennial Year will be off to an energetic start as UP Diliman and the UP Alumni Association line up a full day of celebrations at the Diliman campus. Tau Alpha fraternity will sponsor a fun run in the morning, and at 2 p.m., a parade will wind its way around the campus, to Quezon Memorial Circle and back. Decorated Ikot jeeps, the UP Marching Band, the UP Pep Squad, varsity teams and the UP dance troupes will lead college and student org contingents in street dancing. Motorcades will start in the other UP campuses and converge in Diliman.

At 6 p.m., the UP Carillion bells will ring again for the first time since 1988. Then at 7 p.m., the UP Madrigal Singers and the UP Concert Chorus will perform free at the Amphitheater behind Quezon Hall. There will be food and drink booths, and special Centennial memorabilia will also be on sale.

A big fireworks display sponsored by Beta Epsilon fraternity will cap the evening.

Centennial Commission Takes the Lead

By virtue of Executive Order No. 537, the UP Centennial Commission was formed to spearhead the task of raising P5 billion to build up the University Endowment Fund. This will fund faculty development programs, expansion of student services, modernization of campus facilities, and improvement of libraries and laboratories.

It is composed of distinguished and committed alumni from the UP community, government, private sector and from abroad.

Chairman
Senator Edgardo Angara

Vice Chairman
Dr. Magdaleno B. Albarracin

Exec. Director:
Prof. Benjamin C. Sandoval

Int'l Spokesperson
Prof. Elena C. Pernia

From the Board of Regents

President
Emerlinda C. Roman

Regent
Nelia Gonzales

Regent
Abraham Sarmiento

Regent
Gari Tiongco

Regent
Edmundo Varona (†)

Fundraising Goes Into Overdrive: TARGET ₱5 BILLION

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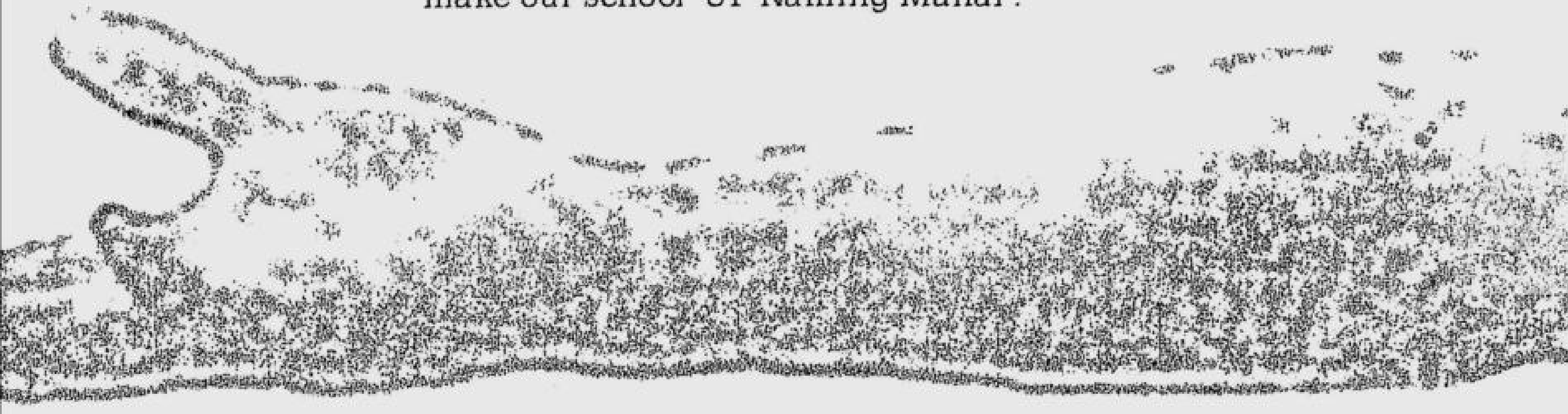
PRIDE in the past.

30 out of 31 National Scientists,
36 out of 57 National Artists,
7 out of 14 presidents,
12 Chief Justices
of the Supreme Court,
15,000 doctors, 8,000 lawyers,
23,000 teachers.

The lives and work of over 247,000 alumni are woven into the fabric of our country.

As we celebrate our 100th year as a national university, we celebrate the minds and hearts that have walked through our halls, and tell the stories that make our school 'UP Naming Mahal'.



POWER of the present.

7 universities,
12 campuses all over the country
258 undergraduate programs
438 graduate programs
Students from almost all 16 regions
and all socio-economic brackets
More than 80% passing rate in most
national licensure exams

Over 50,000 students demonstrate that excellence and strength are born out of diversity.

Today, UP is a melting pot of varied Filipino regions, cultures, and religions. Here, the best minds are not limited by their capacity to pay. Side by side, students prepare for life in the real world by immersing themselves in the varied, vibrant microcosm of the real world that is UP.

PROMISE for th[illegible]

[illegible] UP [illegible] lead the way

[illegible] new grou[illegible] science and technology

emerg[illegible]

[illegible] world-class

The first steps have been taken. A National Science Complex has been established at the Diliman campus. Two science and technology parks have been put up. Cutting edge programs in fields like materials science, biotechnology, pervasive computing, telemedicine, food technology and environmental management are now in place.

In the coming years, expect to see more PhD holders in the faculty, greater specialization in each campus, increased research, and better use of knowledge in real-world applications.

The University of the Philippines will never be content to just sit on its laurels. As we celebrate our Centennial, we're already hard at work on the next 100 years.

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
1908 2008
CENTENNIAL

Published with support from FRIENDS OF U.P.

lead the way

science and technology

world-class

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1908 2008

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RETAKE OF PRECEDING FRAME

CENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES GO INTO FULL SWING

UP Centennial Fellows Named

President Emerlinda Roman and a search committee recently named 12 UP Centennial Fellows, chosen for their deep commitment to scholarship, achievements in their fields, their fidelity to the values of the University, and their contributions to the growth of UP as a community of scholars. The eleven Fellows will be delivering "Self-Reflection Lectures: The View from the Inside" over the course of the Centennial year.

The honorees are: Dr. Gemino Abad, Arts and Letters; Dr. Jose V. Abueva, Political Science; Prof. Randolf David, Sociology; Prof. Emmanuel S. de Dios, Economics; Dr. Maria Serena I. Diokno, History; Dr. Ernesto Domingo, Medicine; Dr. Cecilia Florencio, Food Science and Nutrition; Dr. Jose Magpantay, Physics; Dr. Wilfredo David, Engineering and Agro-Industrial Technology; Dr. Edgardo D. Gomez, Marine Science; Dr. Francisco Nemenzo, former UP President; and Dr. Ramon Santos, Music.

Centennial Songwriting Competition is On

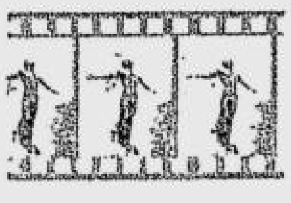
Undergraduate and graduate students of the UP System are invited to enter their original compositions on the theme "Looking Back to Look Forward: 100 Years of Excellence". Songs can be in English, Filipino or Taglish. Deadline for entries is on April 14, 2008. Finalist songs will be performed at the Centennial Concert on June 17. For more information, please contact the College of Music in UP Diliman or visit http://centennial.edu.up.ph.

Gawad Likhaan Launched

The UP Institute of Creative Writing recently launched the UP Centennial Gawad Likhaan, a literary contest open to all Filipino citizens. Six awards, each one worth P200,000 are being offered for original, book-length works in the following categories: novel or short story collection in English; novel or short story collection in Filipino; poetry collection in English; poetry collection in Filipino; a full-length work or collection of creative non-fiction in English; and a full length work or collection of sanaysay in Filipino.

This competition celebrates UP's role in national literature. To date, six National Artists for Literature are from UP. Deadline for entries is on March 31, 2008. For full details on how to join, visit ***http://centennial.up.edu.ph/gawadlikhaan.***

Digital Festival and Filmmaking Competition to Dramatize the UP Experience



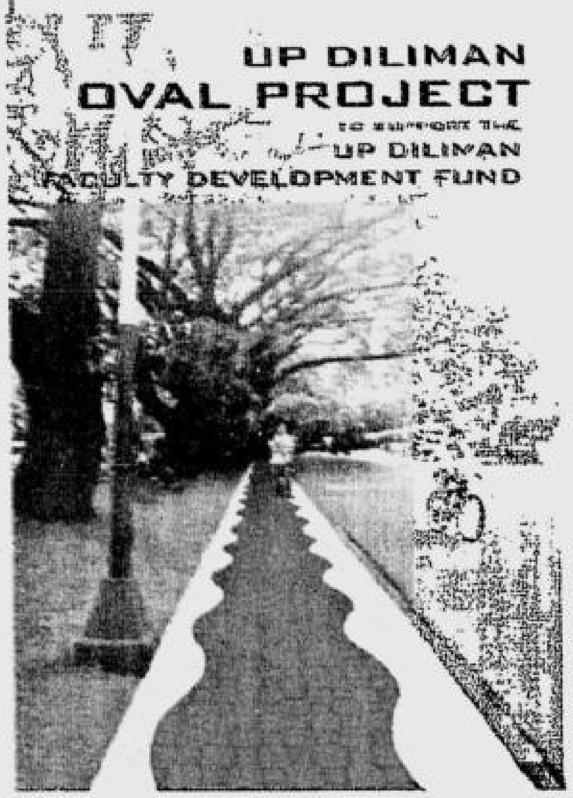
In a nod to the 21st century, the UP College of Mass Communication kicked off a short film competition focused on the unique experience of being part of UP's 100 years. This contest is open to all undergraduate students of the UP system, and will accept entries in the following genres: documentary, narrative, experimental or animation. Deadline for entries is on April 25, 2008. For more information on how to join, visit ***http://centennial.up.edu.ph.***

ALL 7 UP CAMPUSES LINE UP CALENDAR OF CELEBRATIONS

UP DILIMAN

Alumni Oval Walk Project for the Centennial Faculty Development Fund

Ever wanted to carve your name onto a well-loved piece of UP property? Now you can, with permission from the school too! You would also be funding faculty development in the process. For a P25,000 donation, UP Diliman will offer tiles inscribed with an alumnus' name and college to be set around the oval

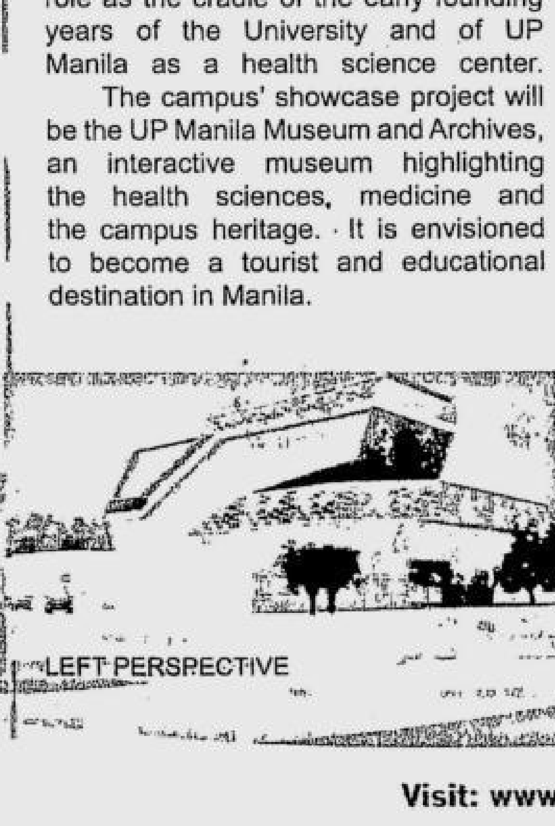


Other UP Diliman events: *January: Donors' reception; February: UP Diliman Month; April 27: Centennial Commencement Exercises; June: Grand Homecoming; July: hosting of the UAAP Season 71; December: Centennial Lantern Parade.*

UP MANILA

UP Manila's Centennial celebration will be centered around the campus' role as the cradle of the early founding years of the University and of UP Manila as a health science center.

The campus' showcase project will be the UP Manila Museum and Archives, an interactive museum highlighting the health sciences, medicine and the campus heritage. It is envisioned to become a tourist and educational destination in Manila.

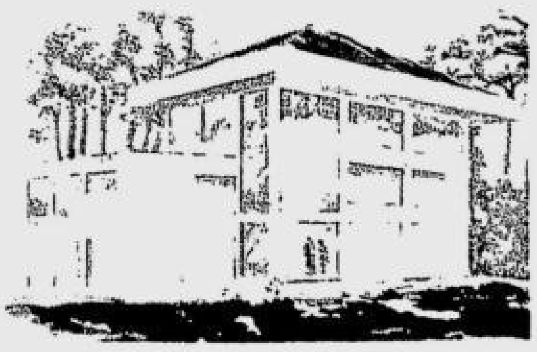


Other UP Manila events: *June: Inauguration of the UP Manila Centennial Oblation Plaza; June 18: Grand Centennial Celebration; June 20: Inauguration of the UP Manila Fitness Trail, UPMAA Alumni Homecoming; June 28: Inauguration of various buildings, offices, and laboratories; August: Centennial Lecture Series; August 29: UP Manila Cultural Show; September: International Conference on Health Professions Education*

UP BAGUIO

The UP Baguio Alumni-Student Center

The Northern Luzon unit is undertaking the construction of the UP Baguio Alumni-Student Center, which is envisioned as a place where alumni can come together for reunions, alumni-association meetings and forums, community events, or simply to meet and talk over a cup of coffee.

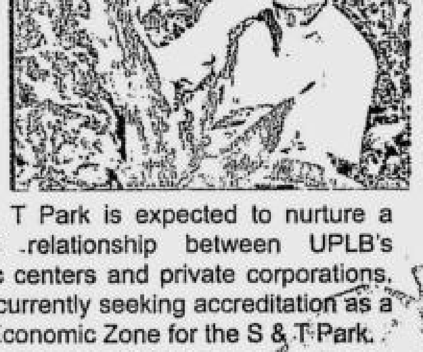


Other UP Baguio events: *February 7-9: Cordillera Studies International Conference; Opening of the Cordillera/Northern Luzon Archive; April 21 to May 3: Centennial Summer Extension Program and Arts Festival; April 2-4: 2008 Science Summit;*

UP LOS BAÑOS

Science and Technology Park

UPLB has set aside 155 hectares of land for development into a Science and Technology Park that will maximize the University's strengths in the areas of Environment, Agriculture and Biotechnology. The park will help promote agri-based technologies, biotechnology and information technology. It will house UPLB's major research centers and is expected to ensure the University's continued leadership in S & T.



The S & T Park is expected to nurture a symbiotic relationship between UPLB's academic centers and private corporations. UPLB is currently seeking accreditation as a Special Economic Zone for the S & T Park.

Other UP LB events: *February: Alternative Energy Showcase; June-November: Sayasay Pagtatanghal Episodes; Search and Marking of UPLB Heritage Trees; October: Centennial Barn Dance, 90th Loyalty Day and Alumni Homecoming, Campus-wide Lecture Series and Book Exhibits, Unveiling of Historical Academic Portals, Fund Raising Launches for Museum of Natural History, Culture and Arts, the Science and Technology Incubation Park, and the Maria Makiling Ecotourism Village.*

UP OPEN UNIVERSITY'S

Unique Offerings

As one of the few distance learning institutions in the country, UP's Open University has lined up some unusual projects. There is the UP Open University TV musical special in October 2008, using UPOU students, faculty, staff and friends in the entertainment industry. There are book projects and Distance Learning Package projects, as well as various fund drives to raise needed support for Faculty Development, a scholarship fund, and modernization of equipment and facilities.

UPOU has also lined up unique promotional items to be sold to help fundraising efforts, including paghahabi cloth, and miniatures versions of the oblation.

Other UPOU events: *February: Forum, Exhibition and Competition "The Virtual and Visual Conversations"; February-April: 100 Days of Global Voices Online; May: Unfurling of "Pagtagni-tagni ng mga Alaala" sewn tapestry; November: Launch of the Centennial Wall*

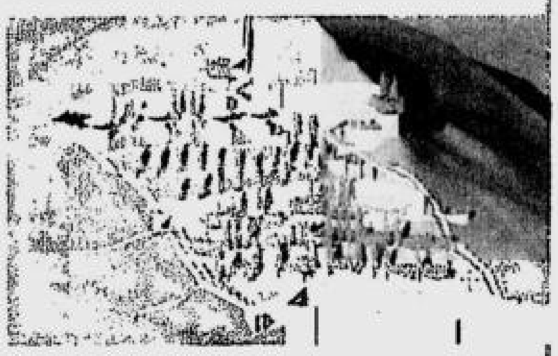
UP VISAYAS

Unique Tri-campus Celebration

In a nod to being located on three campuses in Cebu, Iloilo and Tacloban, UP Visayas' Centennial celebrations will be timed to match the annual celebration of the Sinulog, Dinagyang and Pintados festivals in those three cities. And in September, a Tri-campus Centennial Sportsfest will also be held.

Regents' Hill To Rise In Miag-Ao Campus

Another major UP Visayas' Centennial project is Regents' Hill. A multi-purpose five-level garden on the hill behind the UPV Administration Building in Miagao, Iloilo. It will be an attraction that will both protect the slope as well as serve as a tourist attraction in the campus. As the visitors reach each level, they can sit at the gazebos, enjoy the view and appreciate the medically important indigenous plants and the essences of the ethnobotanicals that will be planted all throughout the slope of the Regents' Hill. And when they reach the top, they can enjoy a wider view of the landscape and the Guimaras Strait from a viewing deck.

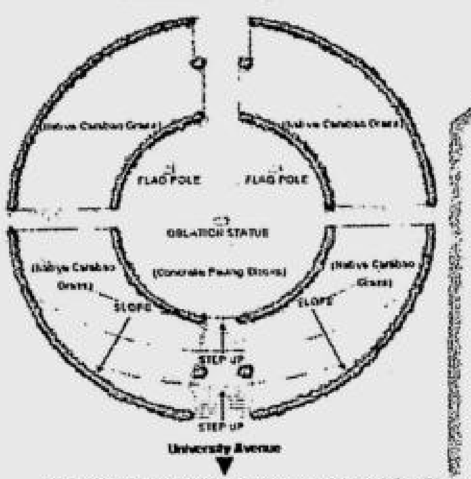


Other UP Visayas events: *July 1-5: Tacloban Grand Anniversary Celebration and Alumni Homecoming; July 12-19: Cebu Grand Anniversary Celebration and Alumni Homecoming; July 21-26: Iloilo Grand Anniversary Celebrations and University Tour; To be scheduled: Leyte Samar Performing Arts Festival; Zarzuela and Retro Concert in Iloilo*

UP MINDANAO

Completes Facelift with a Home for the Oblation

In 1998, UP Mindanao got its very own oblation statue. And in this Centennial year, the campus, along with the UP Alumni Association Davao chapter, is raising funds to build a plaza for it. Meant to become a central gathering place that will also help instill a sense of pride in the community, the Oblation Plaza will feature walkways, plant boxes, and grassy areas.



Sketch of the plaza

Other UP Mindanao events: *February: 13th UP Mindanao Anniversary Celebration; July 9-12: International Conference on Supply Chain Management; August 2006-December 2008: Centennial Lecture Series*

Visit: www.up.edu.ph or www.http://centennial.up.edu.ph for Centennial news and information.

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

1908
The University of the Philippines is established by the First Philippine Legislature in Manila.

1911
UP has seven academic units by this year: Agriculture, Engineering, Law, Liberal Arts, Medicine and Surgery, Veterinary Medicine, and Fine Arts.

1915
UP is led by its first Filipino President, Judge Ignacio Villamor.

1934
The First Lantern Parade is held.

1935
Guillermo Tolentino, later named National Artist, completes the Oblation.

1941
President Manuel Quezon orders UP to close because of the war. Despite the order and the presence of Japanese troops, three schools and four colleges continue to hold classes.

1948-49
UP transfers to the 493-hectare Diliman campus.

1959
UP begins teaching general education courses in humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

1970-1972
There is an upsurge of student activism, as part of the First Quarter Storm. Students form barricades around the campus as the Diliman Commune is set up.

1972
The University of the Philippines System is established. UP Los Baños is declared the first autonomous unit.

1977
The UP Health Sciences Unit, later renamed UP Manila, becomes the second autonomous unit.

1979
UP Visayas is established.

1983
UP Diliman is declared the fourth autonomous unit.

1995
UP Open University and UP Mindanao are established as the fifth and sixth autonomous units.

1999
The Registration System is computerized, rendering obsolete UP's old nickname "University of Pila".

2005
UP Baguio is established as the seventh university of the UP System.

2007
UP kicks off its Centennial Countdown as the Philippine General Hospital celebrates its 100th year.

Breakthroughs from the Country's Premier University

Rise of the National Science Complex

In a major move designed to bolster the country's scientific and technological capabilities, Philippine President Gloria Macapacal-Arroyo ordered the establishment of a National Science Complex and Technology Incubation Park inside UP Diliman. To be housed in a 21.9 hectare portion of the campus, the Complex has P500 million in funding earmarked by the Department of Budget and Management.

The complex is envisioned to become the national hub for the generation and application of new scientific knowledge in the natural and applied sciences and mathematics.

U.P. North Science & Techn

Marine Scientists Embark on Project to Save World's Reefs

Together with universities from Australia, Mexico and Tanzania, the UP Marine Science Institute was designated a Center of Excellence by the Coral Reef Targeted Research and Capacity Building Project (CRTR & CBM), which is a high-priority global initiative that aims to find solutions for the world's rapidly deteriorating coral reefs. Their goal is to find new knowledge, tools and techniques that will help communities and local governments manage their coral reefs.

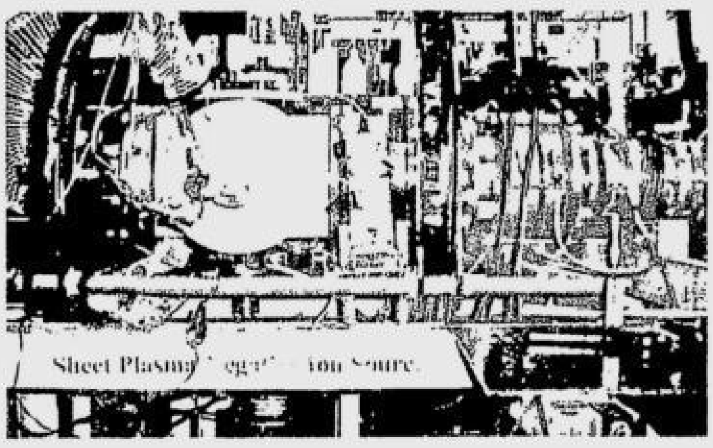
The CRTR& CBM Project is funded by the World Bank and the Australian government, and involves at least eighty of the world's leading marine experts from over fifty institutions.

2 Innovations from National Institute of Physics Awarded International Patents

A titanium nitride (TiN) coating for industrial tools and a technique for visualizing and mapping materials in integrated circuits invented by professors from the National Institute of Physics were recently recognized by the Taiwan and US Patent Offices respectively.

The TiN coating is an innovation that will improve the performance and quality of tools used in industrial processes. It was developed by Dr. Henry J. Ramos at the Plasma Physics Laboratory of the NIP.

On the other hand, the technique developed by Cesar Saloma, Vincent Ricardo Daria and Jelda Jayne Miranda (who is currently working with Intel), uses optical beams to detect defects in integrated circuits, which are essential in high-value industries like I.T., telecommunications and digital appliance production. This breakthrough technique has the potential to save manufacturers millions of dollars in manufacturing defects.

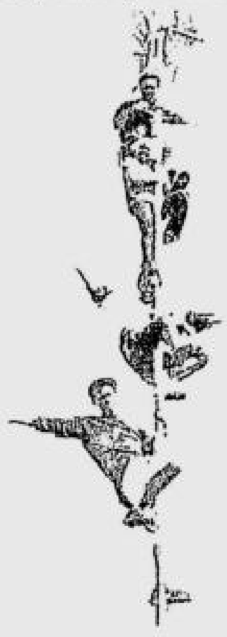


Edible Vaccines Available In 3 To 5 Years

Plant molecular biologists and immunologists from UP Manila and UP Los Baños are collaborating on the preparation of vaccine cuisines. They believe that edible vaccines, which would be cheaper and easier to administer, especially in developing countries like the Philippines, could be ready in as little as 3 years. Dr. Nina Gloriani Barzaga, a professor of medical microbiology and microbial immunology at UPM, says that they are testing vaccines which would elicit mucosal as well as systemic immunity, which would help control transmission at the level where the pathogen enters the host.

UP Techies Connect Batanes Schools to the Net

In a pioneering project in rural connectivity, four professors from the Electrical and Electronics Engineering Department of the College of Engineering in UP Diliman installed wireless internet connections in the country's northernmost province. The team, composed of Professors Manuel Ramos Jr., PhD., Roel Ocampo PhD., Meinard Aclan, and Romarie Lorenzo, trekked and climbed all over the province to set up relay points. The team worked with the Department of Education and the Gearing Up for Internet Literacy in Schools (GILAS) project. Its goal was to verify the validity of the technology, in order to pave the way for succeeding rural connectivity efforts that would bridge the digital divide.



Excellence In Other Fields

- UP graduates consistently top board exams, particularly Law and Dentistry. According to the Professional Regulatory Commission, the top three universities with the highest average scores in the board exams for all courses, are UP units.
- The UP Madrigal Singers win top honors in many international choral competitions, including the Grand Prix in Tours, France.
- The UP Singing Ambassadors won awards in four prestigious chorale competitions in Europe.
- Of the seven Ten Outstanding Young Men awarded in 2005, four are from UP, and another one is a multi-awarded researcher of the University.
- Three UP alumni were recently selected as National Artists: Benedicto Cabrera for Visual Arts, Ramon Obusan for Dance, and Abdulmari Asia Imao for Sculpture.
- Auraeus Solito's "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros" won the Golden Zenith award at the Montreal Film Festival, Jeffrey Jeturian's "Kubrador" the Fipresci prize at the 28th Moscow International Film Festival, Raya Martin's "Maikling Pelicula ng Ysang Indio Nacional" won the Premio Lino Miciche and Premio Musicfeel at the Pesaro Film Festival.

Support the University of the Philippines on its 100th year. Donations can be made to The UP Oblation Fund.

DBP (Quezon Ave.)- Savings Account No. 5-01317-460-8
LBP (Katipunan Branch QC) – Peso Acct. No: 1461-2220-21; Dollar Acct. No.: 1464-0032-46 * Dollar Swift Code: TLBPPHMMAXXX

.For more information, visit: *www.up.edu.ph* or *www.http://centennial.up.edu.ph* for Centennial news and information.